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FOR OCTOBER 1931

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THE long-playing record, asked for in our July editorial and for several months rumored to be in preparation, will be available about October 1, when the RCA Victor Company will issue a list of twenty-five new program transcriptions. ("Program transcription," incidentally, is the name by which the long-playing records will be identified.) That the production of such a disc, coming after years of impatient waiting on the part of the public and countless hours of experimenting and research on the part of the manufacturers, constitutes one of the most important and far-reaching steps ever taken forward by the industry goes, of course, without saying. Not since the announcement several years back of the Orthophonic Victrola and electrical recording has an event of similar importance taken place in the field of recorded music. The urgent need for a good long-playing record—a disc, that is, which would, without sacrificing any of the quality of tone to which we are now accustomed, play at least an entire movement from a symphony without pause—has been clearly recognized. It has been one of the most formidable problems confronting the industry—and, at the same time, the one that needed most to be adequately solved. After the development of electrical recording to its present state of approximate

perfection, it was realized that only one thing more was needed to make recorded music an eminently satisfactory substitute for (and in some cases a decided improvement upon) the actual performance. Only one thing more was needed to give recorded music the dignity and respect to which its merits amply entitled it. That thing, of course, was the long-playing record, the admirable disc which its producers, the RCA Victor Company, call the program transcription.



The process by which the playing time of a 12-inch record can be increased to over three times its ordinary length and that of the ordinary 10-inch disc to about four times its usual length consists of increasing the number of grooves on the record and reducing the speed of the turn-table revolutions from seventy-eight to thirty-three and a third per minute. On the standard record the number of grooves per inch ranges from sixty to eighty. On the new long-playing record this has been increased to one hundred and fifty—in some cases, indeed, to as many as one hundred and seventy. To make this finer grooving possible, a new material, called Victrolac, will be used for the 12-inch long-playing records. This material,

which is flexible and hence not likely to crack or warp, has never before been utilized for phonograph records; and it is believed that it will represent a marked improvement on materials now in use, since it is practically unbreakable, tests have proved it to possess extraordinary wearing qualities, and, finally, there is very little surface noise. Since the grooves on the new records will be much closer together, needles with finer points will be necessary. For this purpose the RCA Victor Company has developed a chromium plated needle which can be played for three hundred minutes. (A chromium plated needle for use with the standard records will also be issued.)



The new program transcriptions cannot be used satisfactorily on acoustic machines. Requiring a greater degree of amplification than the ordinary records, they must be played on electrical reproducing phonographs, where the volume can be regulated. The new RCA Victor machines will be equipped, of course, with two-speed motors, so that either type record can be played. For those who own electrical machines without the two-speed motors, an inexpensive device will be available which will enable the motor to operate at either speed. Thus there is nothing inordinately complicated about the mechanism necessary to play the new records, nor is the expense involved prohibitive.



Headed by a single 12-inch disc containing on its two sides the whole of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony played by Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, a group of twenty-five long-playing records, covering a wide variety and range of music, comprises the first list of program transcriptions to be issued by the RCA Victor Company. The Fifth is reviewed under Orchestra; a complete list of the other discs will be found on page 372 of this issue. Review copies of most of these records did not reach us in time to be considered this month; they will be reviewed in the next issue. With the exception of the Fifth Symphony, which was recorded last July by the Philadelphia Orchestra and thus has the distinction of being the first major work to be recorded the new way, all these program transcriptions have been copied from standard records. For example, the *Petrouchka* Suite, played by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, formerly available on five 12-inch record sides, is now available on the two sides of a single 10-inch record. Similarly, the Haydn *Clock* Symphony, played by Toscanini and the Philharmonic-Symphony, previously issued on seven 12-inch record sides, is now put on the two sides of a single 12-inch long-playing disc. And there are numerous other examples just as astonishing, as a glance at the list on page 372 will reveal.



An important feature of the new records and one which will have an irresistible appeal to collectors is the extremely moderate prices asked for them. Whereas the *Clock* Symphony was \$8 for the album of four records, the same work and performance on one long-playing record are priced at \$4.50. And in many cases the prices are just one-half as much as before. Considering the practical and musical advantages of these new records, the importance of the low prices to the average collector of limited means can scarcely be estimated. Although we have by no means had time to listen to all these records, hurried hearings of several of them

convinced us that they were recorded fully as well as the standard discs. Moreover, in several cases the recording seemed even better. In the case of *Petrouchka*, for instance, there seemed to be a decided improvement. Formerly a rather dull and muffled recording, in its new form it is clear and brilliant, remarkable for its clarity and great wealth of detail. The record sides in this particular piece have been joined together extraordinarily well; it is doubtful, in fact, whether anyone unfamiliar with the standard set would be able to determine just where the old record sides ended. Whether or not all these records have been "dubbed" with similar success we do not as yet know, having heard only a few of them. Successful "dubbing" is said to be an exceedingly difficult job.



In every conceivable way, then, the long-playing records appear to be an immense improvement over the standard records. They do not make it necessary to break up a long musical composition into three- and four-minute snatches. Record sides have only to be changed every fifteen minutes or so. Whole movements of symphonies and entire overtures and other short musical works can be put on one side of a disc, and thus can be listened to without annoying interruptions. And all this is available at about one-half the former price for the same selections in cruder and less convenient form. No great imagination is necessary to see the wonderful results all this should have on the industry. In the editorial for the July issue of *Disques*, where the question of the long-playing record was discussed, we stated it to be our belief that the thing most "needed to restore the record business to its former flourishing state is a long-playing record The demand for it obviously is pressing and world-wide, and the manufacturer who ultimately gives it to us will not only provide the stimulus so urgently needed by the industry; he will also add immeasurably to the musical value of records." This has seemingly been accomplished.

(Continued on page 343)

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotopia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

Strawinsky's Testament*

By JOSEPH COTTLER

"God," wrote Paul Morand a few years ago, referring to Jean Cocteau's new exploits, "has been very much the fashion in Paris last Winter . . . since Spring God has been the rage . . . Having come, or more appropriately, returned to God about eighteen months ago, Cocteau proposes to arrive at religion not naked, but with all his past, his friends, his era, and his esthetics." From Morand's ironical comment one gathers the sense of his own understanding of what salvation is, or at least what it is not: as, for instance, the publishing of a technique for storming heaven. This also is vanity and sin, so that no one need take Cocteau seriously if he sheds a witty tear. Morand is quite right. If the Devil came contrite to church we ought to cast him out indignantly. We need him in his place. His conversion is another devilish trick and we dare not risk the folly of becoming dupes.

Of late this has been the attitude of the respectable critics toward Strawinsky. His detractors have long been clamoring against empty virtuosity as though virtuosity is a commonplace and the virtuoso a pretender. Even his admirers have at last become uneasy at the range and variety of his work. Sworn in fealty to the strength of his individuality and having proclaimed him deliverer at the same time from the harmonic mists of Debussyism and the routine of the German academicians, they hoped in return that he would consistently give signs of having been filed away correctly and reacted to once and for all. The man who amazed with his resourcefulness in handling rhythms, instruments and sonorities was expected to hold by the stock-in-trade in which his audience now had a vested interest.

De Schloezer, an excellent critic and Strawinsky's biographer, writing in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* on a performance of the *Capriccio*, puts this trouble neatly: "A masterpiece," he says. "But one of those successes that makes one fearful. Once again Strawinsky has done what he likes, but I cannot help wondering anxiously: Why does he like precisely that? There are some things, it seems, that a man like him has not the right to want to do . . . The *Capriccio* is a work of remarkable virtuosity. It is created with nothing." At bottom, to be sure, the artist is forced to select from his material only what he likes, and provided he knows what his material is, it becomes the critic's function to expound the necessity of choice. But so arrogant are the critics that they would turn the tables and compel the artist of taste to be inexorably logical for their caprice. "A sign! A principle! A dogma!" they cry, groping for the peg on which to hang their own view of things. But this Strawinsky, with his essentially practical nature, cannot give them. He is not one of those who believes that the artist works with universals and hence De Schloezer can say of him that he works with nothing.

The critic's confusion is acute. Just when Strawinsky is promoted as the two-fisted creator of *Petrouchka* and the *Sacre*, he upsets our filing system with the opiate melody of *Apollon Musagète* from the stupor of which the filer has hardly

* SYMPHONIE DE PSAUMES. (Strawinsky) Six sides. L'Orchestre des Concerts Straram and Alexis Vlassoff Chorus conducted by Igor Strawinsky. Three 12-inch discs (C-67962D to C-67964D) in album. Columbia Set No. 162. \$6.

recovered when he is given the problem of dealing with *Oedipus Rex*, and now the *Symphony of Psalms*, composed in 1930 "to the glory of God" and dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Well might the critic draw himself up with dignity and despite the splendor of each work feel that Strawinsky is trying to pull the critical leg. A *Symphony of Psalms* from Strawinsky might be the real thing and it might be merely an ironical comment on the Russian system of disestablishment, or a novel esthetic exercise. Perhaps it is just as well to commit oneself to nothing cautiously.

II

If the case against Strawinsky has not gone quite so far, it is thanks entirely to the brilliant slogan of "classicism!" Strawinsky, then, has returned to classicism. But what does the slogan mean? Surely not that Strawinsky is aping Bach. The term classicism, if it is at all significant, refers to a method of writing: to clarity, logic, an avoidance of the superfluous no matter what the sensuous result may be. In that sense, Strawinsky has always been a classic musician, at least from *Petrouchka* on, and within the limitations, of course, of the literary text with which he has chanced to work. But essentially, where the classic method consists in basing harmony and sonority on the contact of voices and not on harmonic preciousness alone, most of Strawinsky's scores, and especially those that are not for the stage, would have had the benediction of Bach himself. The *Sacre* is an excellent example of the classic method, as is the Octet for wind instruments, and the piano Concerto. *Apollon Musagète* and *Oedipus Rex* are therefore no startling changes in Strawinsky's progress.

The *Symphony of Psalms* carries on the classic method to its most naked and exalted effect. I doubt if Strawinsky or anyone else has ever been more successful in flowing together the independent parts of a composition. To me it seems that neither religion nor musical thought has seldom been more signal; the surest of contemporary composers has never been so sure of his emotional effects. The instrumentation is noteworthy as an instance of how precise and scientific is Strawinsky's musical heterodoxy: five flutes, four oboes, English horn, three bassoons, double bassoon, four horns, small trumpet in D, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, harp, two pianos, violoncellos and double basses—a calculated balancing of tones that blends melancholically with the voices of the chorus. The selections from the Vulgate, chosen as text, are the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of the thirty-ninth psalm for the first movement of the Symphony, the first four verses of the fortieth for the second movement, and the entire hundred and fiftieth for the last movement. These selections enunciate the essence of the religious feeling in terms of a robust faith. The first is a statement of human destiny and the need to which it gives rise.

Hear my prayer . . .
Before I go hence, and be no more.

The second and third follow as apt statement of faith; the second

And he hath put a new song in my mouth . . .

the third a hallelujah which names the musical instruments for praise of the Lord.

The broad outlines of the music are very simple, in accordance with the classic principle of economy, the direct nature of the textual subject and the unity of

feeling. Through all parts of the plan of each movement a brief motive operates so smoothly that the effect is of a melody developing substance and continuous life without effort. These are quantitative terms which might apply to any contrapuntal work of the eighteenth century, but there is one important difference between Strawinsky and Bach which has to do with climactic order. Now the climax is a romantic concept and opposed to the restraints of strict classicism since it assigns comparative values and one supreme value. Its analogue in religious thought might be the concept of divine intervention so that it imposes a Christian modification of classicism. But Bach did not use it. For one thing, he was too thoroughly religious. A Russian musicologist, some years ago, took for his thesis with strong presumption that the *Art of Fugue* was religious in spirit. So with all of Bach's work. It could not be otherwise with him to whom any life was the religious life. And, obviously, if God is immanent the question of values is meaningless. But perhaps to this day and to the composer of *Petrouchka*, it is not so meaningless. Not, however, in the strict part writing does Strawinsky order his climaxes. He manages it rather by sonorities and volumes. For illustration: in the first movement, the emphasis works up through the words (I give the English equivalent to the Latin), "My cry . . . I am a sojourner as all my fathers . . ." until the gathered wave bursts with "Spare me . . . I shall be no more." The musical idea, meanwhile, is kept integral and free throughout the sonorous impulse.

III

This whole question is part of a more general one of fitting music to a text, a problem in which Bach was so masterful. There is an interesting parallel between the second movement of the Symphony ("I waited patiently") and the section of the *Confiteor* in the B Minor Mass ("I am waiting"). When Bach comes to these words, the score undergoes the following change: the Andante becomes Adagio, the harmony hovers in uncertain key until a reassurance of faith in the text resolves the doubt into a major chord which introduces a universal joy with which the Credo ends. Similarly in the Symphony: In the meditative theme with which the second movement begins, the presence of Bach is felt most inevitably until "et immisit . . . he hath put a new song in my mouth" climaxes the "waiting."

The third movement of the *Symphony of Psalms* is the greatest. There the genius of Strawinsky imposes most on his previous restraint because the text is rhapsodic where before it was lyric. "Praise Him for His excellent greatness." When he comes to that, the old Strawinsky, he of the *Firebird* and the *Sacre*, stirs up the rhythmic chant, battery and orchestral shades into a primitive ritual which at the last dissolves radiantly: "Praise ye the Lord," all as though God were no longer the Big Quibble, but as He was in the beginning.



The Mathematician Looks at Music*

By WINTHROP PARKHURST

Of all the arts, music is the most maddeningly elusive, the most complete and tantalizing incarnation of a paradox. Outwardly it is a slight disturbance of the atmosphere, a series of minute variations in its density, a modest phenomenon instantly shamed by a small thunderstorm. But inwardly, as every music-lover knows, it is an inordinately complex disturbance of the human organism, a series of vast and incalculable changes in spiritual tension.

To a very considerable extent, of course, all the arts have a share in this paradox. They all begin with small physical vibrations and end with great psychic convulsions; they all are rooted in the earth while pointing skyward; they all illustrate the ancient Persian aphorism, "The heart of a rose is exalted because its feet are humble." But music is uniquely paradoxical in also being the most emotionally turbulent of all the arts even while it is the most tranquil, the most logical. For even while music is all exuberance, so also, perversely enough, it is all equations. It speaks with a logical accent while in delirium. It thus does not remain content with being a natural phenomenon and a human drama, a shudder of the atmosphere and of the heart at the same moment; in addition to being these two contradictory things it is a third thing, alien to both, which is mathematical.

Most discussions of music confine themselves to only one of these three characteristics, the emotional; and this emotional side of music is certainly quite as important as any other. But we do grave violence to the unusually versatile art of tone when we forget that the trinity which it unanswerably is has a third person. What is more, we dwarf and cripple our view, not of music only but also of the physical world which gives it nurture, whenever the logical aspect of this triune art is neglected. For the logical aspect of music, optically projected in the language of numbers and their ratios, is no less an audible projection of nature. In other words, music is nurtured by nature because nature herself is mathematical.

In human nature reason and the emotions, the mind and the heart, are warring factions. Of all the platitudes served up about itself by humanity, there is none so spectacularly true as that platitude which calls man a dual creature. His feelings and his ideas are in perpetual conflict. The nearest thing to occasional agreement is constant compromise. Consequently, being a bifurcated creature who reads himself into everything round about him, he feels very little surprise upon hearing that the most emotional of the arts is the most logical. But it is seldom that he is not astonished upon hearing that the mathematical side of music, far from warring with its emotional nature, is embedded within it so deeply as to be inextricable. Simultaneously, and in equal measure, it is an air-wave, a delirium of the soul, and an equation; and the last is not the least member of this strange fraternity.

It is to Pythagoras in the sixth century before Christ that we owe our first glimpse of the logical or mathematical aspect of music. How much Pythagoras himself owed to Egypt is uncertain, for he is believed to have lived there for many years,

* This is the first of two articles on acoustical laws by Mr. Parkhurst. The second, dealing with the tempered scale, will appear in the November issue.

as well as to have traveled through Persia in search of wisdom. Indeed, like many of the early Greek philosophers, he is probably a half-mythical creature—a human peg upon which historians have hurriedly hung their hats before racing bare-headed after vanishing eras. But whether the musical speculations attributed to Pythagoras all came out of a single head or out of many heads, the fact remains that those speculations took definite shape in Greece during the sixth century before the beginning of the Christian era.

II

The fact is surprising for two reasons. It is surprising, first of all, because Greek music as an art was a trivial enterprise. As far as archaeological records are able to show to the contrary, the Greeks produced no music at all which can command the interest of any man not an antiquarian. They were interested, to be sure, in the art of melody; the variety of the Greek modes, or scale structures, amply proves this. But of harmony and counterpoint they were ignorant; the few instruments which they fabricated were inadequate; and they had absolutely no notion whatsoever of the rudiments of musical staff notation. In short, according to the most modest of contemporary standards, the Greeks had no music and they cared for none.

The theories of Pythagoras are surprising for a second reason: they were exceedingly shrewd theories, extraordinarily shrewd theories, considering the *a priori* foundation they rested on. It is easy for us today to pat Pythagoras on the back and cry, "Clever!" But it needed more than cleverness to do what that Greek thinker did when he did it. Acoustical science was a book not to be opened until the seals of twenty-four centuries had been broken from it. Nothing was known about air-waves. Nothing was known about harmonic tones. Nothing was known about a single scientific phase of music save this: a stretched string made a pleasant noise when you plucked it, and different strings made different noises when you plucked them. The ancient lyre of Terpander was equipped with strings of various lengths, and in tuning that primitive instrument musicians no doubt idly observed that the pitch of the tones varied somewhat according to the length of the strings and their tension. But the relationship was not consciously noted. No one thought of exploring it or studying it. The ear was pleased or displeased, and that ended it.

And then arose a man (composite though he may have been) who put his mental ear to the ground and, by virtue of that original act, heard the cosmos singing. Not as a musician, in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather as a mathematician who hearkened to the melody of numbers, he divined a song hid from the ears of his predecessors. It was an endless song, without beginning and without end, that stretched to the uttermost reaches of the cosmos. It was the music of the spheres, the symphony of the universe, the cosmic harmony which abode in the realm of numbers and became incarnate in the body of the heavens.

And as the stars themselves were celestial parts of one great melody, so the little parts of the earth echoed that silent ecstasy in imitation. What was true celestially was true terrestrially. Heretofore men had tuned their lyres by ear; they had let their gross senses make their music. But whereas the senses were

fallible, the mind was infallible and perfect. Let gross sense be abandoned for pure reason. The fleshly ear was crude and deceptive; mathematics alone could open the door to a universe which was music in essence since the seed from which the world sprang was a number. Therefore the lyre should be tuned to that cosmic principle; the law of numbers alone could make true music.

It was *a priori* reasoning undoubtedly, and with a vengeance. To empirically minded men it was, and is, thoroughly shocking. But it so happened that Pythagoras reached his goal by this mental somersault, getting very much nearer the whole truth of the matter than any other thinker contrived to do for many centuries. His guess, if we choose to call it that, was an inspired one. Knowing nothing of the science of acoustics he yet anticipated the mathematical basis, not of music alone, but of the whole of that natural world which gives it sustenance. For the first time in recorded history an art that was destined to remain long in embryo became, on its logical side, really articulate.

Indeterminate things called musical tones, vague vacua between those tones called intervals, strings of assorted lengths that produced various indefinite tones when stretched either a little tighter or a little looser—this was the hazy and jumbled set of data which Pythagoras, guided by his passionate faith in numbers, swept out of his musical house as so much rubbish. An orderly universe begotten by number had no use for it; a musical universe guided by reason had no use for it. Therefore, let musicians be guided likewise. If a string of some given length—say a foot—produced some given tone when you plucked it, the same string reduced to exactly half its original length (not approximately half but exactly half) was eternally destined to produce another tone which would form a harmonious interval with the first one. But as a string could be divided into two equal parts, so also could it be divided into three parts, into four parts, and so on. Such was the series of natural numbers for such was nature's own series. True music must be based on the same principle since any other method of tuning was false to nature.

III

Reasoning thus, or approximately thus, Pythagoras then proceeded to prove his theorem. Taking a single stretched string, he put his speculations to the test in that fateful crucible. And lo! the experiment succeeded. When the string was divided into two exactly equal parts, both parts produced a tone an octave higher—a tone strangely similar to the original one, as 2 is similar to 1, being its duplicate, but different also from the original tone, as 2 is eternally set apart from 1 in the number series.

But the octave was only the beginning. As a musical interval it was a great primal cosmos which could continue to generate itself for ever at higher pitches. But this great interval needed smaller intervals as filling. How should those smaller intervals be selected? Obviously, by appealing again to numbers. Therefore, as the string had originally been divided in half, by 2, now it should be divided in thirds, by 3, in order to arrive at the next great harmonious interval in a logical manner. And yet again it should be divided in quarters, by 4, in order that still another interval might be formed in the same sure manner. Moreover, as one part of the string had produced the octave when it was divided by 2, so two parts

must produce the next interval when the string was divided by 3, and three parts must produce the next interval in turn when the string was divided by 4. In other words, by simply taking the numbers 1, 2, and 3—a natural series—and placing beneath them the numbers 2, 3, and 4—another natural series,—you formed the fractions $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{2}{3}$, and $\frac{3}{4}$ which stood for the relative lengths of a string producing the three great harmonious intervals of the universe.

And finally, from these three intervals (which we now call the octave, the fifth, and the fourth) could be deduced the entire scale. As the intervals of the fourth and the fifth, when added together, produced the octave, so the difference between them was a single large step. Two of these large steps (C-D, D-E) made the interval called the third (C-E), and the difference between the third and the fourth produced a single small step (E-F) called a hemitone or semitone. In short, it was a mere matter of calculation (once the three standard harmonious intervals had been established) to construct a full scale within the compass of an octave, whereafter the same process would be repeated all over again. Thus mathematics was again justified of her daughters. By number, and by number alone, was the scale engendered.

The simplicity of Pythagoras's approach is disarming. On its surface his reasoning seems almost childish. But profundity lurked beneath his worship of mathematics, and there was a greater god in his modest temple than even he suspected. Not only is Pythagoras's trinity of harmonious intervals fully justified by twentieth century acoustics, being pure concords according to the ear and to the laboratory; modern acoustical science has discovered that the simple numerical series which Pythagoras intuitively seized upon is carried out by nature on a scale that transcends the wildest dreams of a Greek genius.

IV

It is indeed a pity, almost a tragedy, that such a man as Pythagoras should have been fated to be born more than two millennia ago; for no other thinker on record would have derived so much ecstatic delight from the acoustical discoveries of the past two centuries. He, more than any man who ever lived, surely deserved to know that nature is intoxicated by the melody of numbers, never slaking her musical thirst though she drinks continuously. For, strangely enough, nature's appetite in this matter is insatiable. She is content with nothing less than an endless series, not only of numbers arranged in a natural sequence but also of tones in an ascending sequence without limit.

Let us take a simple example for an illustration. Let us take a stretched string one foot long, and pluck it. Immediately the entire string vibrates, imparting to the adjacent air a series of little compressions and rarefactions. These, traveling about 1170 feet a second, reach the ear-drum which is moved backward and forward. The sensation of a tone is then noticed. This tone, being produced by the vibration of the whole string, is the lowest and most conspicuous, and hence is called the fundamental or first partial. But at the same time the string has automatically divided itself into two parts, the middle point (called a node) being relatively stationary. Each of these two parts has simultaneously started vibrating also, and twice as fast as the string in its entirety. Both parts produce tones

one octave higher. Again, automatically, the string divides itself into three parts, each vibrating thrice as fast as the whole string; yet again it divides into four parts, vibrating four times as fast, into five parts, six parts, seven parts, and so on beyond imagination—in brief, endlessly.

At once, therefore, we have two series. Taking the length of the string as 1, we have the series

$$1 \dots \frac{1}{2} \dots \frac{1}{3} \dots \frac{1}{4} \dots \frac{1}{5} \dots \frac{1}{6} \dots \text{etc.}$$

And, taking the vibration of the whole string as 1, we have the series

$$1 \dots 2 \dots 3 \dots 4 \dots 5 \dots 6 \dots \text{etc.}$$

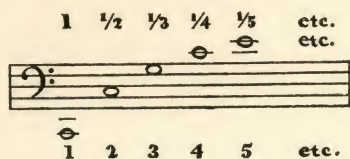
The fractional series stands for the relative lengths into which the plucked string divides by its own volition, while the series of integers stands for the relative number of vibrations of those shortening segments. It makes no difference how long the original string is; it makes no difference how tightly or loosely it is stretched; it makes no difference what substance the string is composed of; it makes no difference how weakly or how vigorously we pluck it; invariably, automatically, the string divides into those smaller and smaller segments technically called loops, while the rate of their vibration increases in inverse ratio to their magnitude. That is, half the string vibrates twice as fast, one-third of the string vibrates thrice as fast, and so on. For we are now in the realm of nature's music. We are hearkening to the melody of mathematics. We are in the thick of the harmony of the cosmos.

Here also, it may be said, we are in the heart of a matter having philosophic interest only. What value have such facts for the musician? Surprisingly enough, they are particularly valuable to the musician even though he is unfamiliar with their existence. For these secondary tones called partials or natural harmonics have a far-reaching and a double significance.

First, the entire range of the musical palette depends upon them. That is to say, they create what is called *timbre* or tone-color, the varying tonal characteristics of different instruments depending upon the relative intensity of these partials or harmonics. The oboe differs from the flute, the flute differs from the clarinet, on account of them—a fact which may readily be demonstrated by manufacturing the tone of some instrument with a group of tuning-forks (whose partials are so weak as to be negligible). For example, the tone of a violin will be simulated almost exactly if three tuning forks having the relative loudness of 165, 60, and 27, respectively, are tuned in the inflexible ratio of the first three partials. Similarly, to take the clarinet for one other example, its characteristically mellow and throaty tone may be simulated by artificially producing the first twelve partials and giving these the relative strength of 29, 7, 20, 1, 2, 6, 8, 16, 9, 30, 35—giving the first partial or fundamental tone, that is, 29 degrees of loudness, the second partial 7 degrees of loudness, and so on. In short, as was just said, instrumental coloring—the whole sweep of the orchestral palette—is derived from differences in intensity between that series of natural overtones or harmonics which are always related to one another as the members of the arithmetical series 1..2..3..4..5..etc., are related.

Secondly, and perhaps even more interestingly, harmony itself depends upon this mathematical passion of nature. For the first five partials of every single tone

form a harmony that is known as the "chord of nature"—a true major chord built up from the octave, fifth, fourth, and third. It makes no difference what pitch we select for our lowest tone, or fundamental, or first partial, or what instrument we select to produce it. Varying only in their relative intensities, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th partials will appear infallibly as a chord having a fixed nature and finding its bass an octave below in the 1st partial:



In the foregoing illustration the upper series of fractions represents the relative length of loops, or string segments, into which the string has divided in order to produce the tones in question, whereas the lower series of integers represents the relative rate of the vibration of those segments, taking 1 in both instances as our starting point. But it should not be supposed that these numbers necessarily refer back only to that starting point; for, as a matter of fact, they also refer to one another. That is, the second partial (produced by half the string) is vibrating twice as fast as the first partial, and the third partial (produced by one-third of the string) is vibrating not only thrice as fast as the whole string but $\frac{3}{2}$ as fast as the second partial. In other words, this seemingly simple numerical series 1..2..3..4..5.. expresses the complete *inter*-relationship of the harmonics as well as their relationship to the starting point. In short, every single number bears the exact ratio to every other number that the vibrations of the corresponding partials bear to one another, irrespective of the pitch (the actual vibration rate) of the first partial. Certainly the musician nature is a mathematician with a vengeance, caring never a whit for vulgar quantity but wedded eternally to logic and pure proportion.

Nor must it be supposed that the first five partials here illustrated exhaust the series, for, as has been said, that series (ideally even if not audibly) is endless. It will be noticed that the intervals become steadily smaller, and after a short time many of these higher partials are discordant, although they generally become progressively weaker. For the latter reason the discords are audibly negligible. However, since the fractional and integral series are both endless, an interesting logical conclusion at once follows, namely, that the string segments tend toward 0 as their limit while successive intervals tend toward unison as *their* limit. In other words, the string lengths are expressed by the series,

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & 1 & & 1 & & 1 & & 1 \\ 1 & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & 0 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & 2 & & 3 & & 4 & & 5 \end{array}$$

while the successive intervals are expressed by the series

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & 1 & & 2 & & 3 & & 4 \\ 0 & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & \dots\dots\dots & 1 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & 2 & & 3 & & 4 & & 5 \end{array}$$

It will readily be seen that these decreasing intervals cannot possibly reach unison—they only approach unison as their limit. But while it is hence clear that this ascent into higher and higher octaves does not bring us home to that unison interval which we started from (the single tone which is represented by our first partial), it is also clear that something else quite as interesting has happened, namely, *that our single vibrating string has produced every conceivable element of the scale, and every conceivable interval, in the universe. Were the higher partials brought down the necessary number of octaves and placed within the compass of a single octave, we should hence have a chromatic scale composed of the smallest intervals conceivable by the human intellect; indeed, those intervals would defy the imagination since, no matter how many chromatic tones we may imagine, there are still more of them.*

Such a concept is assuredly a dizzy one. Pythagoras himself would have been stupefied by it. And yet—there is something still more impressive and breathtaking in our conclusion than the sheer numerical magnitude of those partials which every vibrating body yields perpetually; it is the breathless calm which pervades that delirium, the logical peace and overshadowing orderliness of that ecstasy to which the universe is abandoned. This it is, in truth, which gives double significance to the mathematical view of music, and which renders “the music of the spheres” a phrase of resounding import.

[To be concluded]

(Continued from page 333)

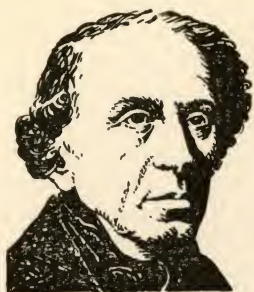
Before an audience that included many prominent musicians and music critics, the RCA Victor Company gave an advance demonstration of its long-playing record on September 17 at a banquet held at the Savoy-Plaza Hotel, New York. An evolutionary review of the development of the phonograph, during which records by Melba, Patti and Caruso were played on machines that ranged from the crude early models to the Orthophonic Victrola, preceded the demonstration of the new disc.



Celebrating with the September number the one-hundredth issue of the magazine, Compton Mackenzie's *Gramophone* distinguishes itself this month by peremptorily sweeping aside the news that a long-playing record is being developed in America. It is, we are given to understand, nonsense pure and simple. Why? Well, because “expert opinion over here depreciates the attaching of much importance to the news that the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra was summoned for a special summer recording session to record Beethoven's Fifth Symphony on the two sides of a 12-inch Victor record. The result is not likely to reach us nor to flutter any recording dove-cotes.” This, coming in such assured terms from the leading gramophone publication, is surely delightful. Maybe the *Gramophone* is quite correct in its confident assumption that the result of that incredible recording session will not “flutter any recording dove-cotes,” but we wonder what it will do to British “expert opinion”?

Giacomo Meyerbeer

By RICHARD J. MAGRUDER



Most musical dictionaries and histories, commonly given to pronouncing very decided and often sweeping opinions on composers and their works, are cautious—even excessively so—in their estimate of Meyerbeer. The majority of them, indeed, avoid the troublesome matter altogether, contenting themselves with a brief biographical sketch and a tart description of his outstanding works. Occasionally one is found following an even simpler plan: Meyerbeer is omitted entirely. A shining example of this latter method is furnished by the late Eaglefield Hull's *Music: Classical, Romantic and Modern*, which has space for a

line or so about Massenet, Cui, Delibes and Arensky, but none for Meyerbeer, who, for all his faults, at least managed to avoid the prim, suffocating sweetness of Massenet. But perhaps Meyerbeer couldn't be made to fit plausibly under either of Dr. Hull's three heads.

Generally, however, Meyerbeer manages to get in the dictionaries and histories, even if the comment is somewhat icily phrased. The reader of such literature, thus left to draw his own conclusions, has only to note the abundance of nice things said about Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and other such great ones in order to guess pretty accurately Meyerbeer's proper place in musical history. If, as seems quite likely, this reader should gather that that position is at best a relatively minor one, he should not allow that to be sufficient to discourage any curiosity he may have about Meyerbeer's music. There are, in fact, plenty of composers who, similarly disposed of by the authorities, have yet managed to contrive music that, however unimportant and slight it may be in merit from the point of view of those who profess to dwell perpetually and comfortably on the loftiest heights, nonetheless succeeds in pleasantly titillating less exalted ears.

Like everything else in this, still, though nowadays perhaps somewhat sourly, conceded to be far and away the, best of all possible worlds, mediocrity has a well-defined and highly useful purpose. Contact with mediocre things may conceivably dull and corrupt some tastes, but these tastes are probably pretty bad to begin with, so that it is hardly likely that much serious damage could be done. And contact with mediocre things just as often, for more salubrious and sensitive tastes, makes subsequent contact with first-rate things appreciably more pleasurable and exciting, if only for the vivid contrast afforded. Besides, things that are patently and unarguably mediocre provide convenient objects for the scorn of those who are not particularly adroit at sifting the good from the bad. It gives them something to talk about. They feel, and, in fact, are, pretty safe in denouncing Meyerbeer, just as they are reasonably safe in tossing their precious bouquets at Bach. One need not apologize for listening with a certain amount of interest to Meyerbeer, then, just as one need not apologize for going to a prize fight, occasionally getting drunk, refusing to vote when both candidates are equally and hopelessly bad, or reading throughout a state paper from the pen of one of the later Presidents of the United

States. Such aberrations are perfectly understandable and human, and, in fact, one is inclined to suspect the person who doesn't now and then reveal some such startling weakness.

Several years ago, on one of its innumerable foreign lists, Victor released an odd record entitled, somewhat irrelevantly, *The Flight of the Bird*. The purpose of the disc was to show how different composers, given a simple little tune, would have orchestrated and developed it. Bach, Wagner, Haydn, Gounod, Johann Strauss and Meyerbeer were some of the composers represented. The affair was arranged by Siegfried Ochs, and an orchestra, conducted by one Ferdy Kaufmann, played it. The disc is of slight interest, and it is mentioned here only because of the part that Meyerbeer had in it. Ochs, in the brief portion assigned to Meyerbeer, managed to crowd in the salient characteristics of the composer's music—for example, his knowledge of all the cunning, if superficial, tricks and devices by which an artist seeks to convince his audience that he has something of importance to say, when actually he has only another dreary platitude to offer, his often startling instrumental effects (not, of course, so startling to ears that have been subjected to modern music), the boldness, brilliance and vivacity of his rhythms in his happier moments, his heavy, laborious attempts to make his sometimes sluggish music flow evenly and smoothly: these Ochs has suggested with admirable felicity and cogency. The disc also serves to demonstrate that even in such fine company Meyerbeer manages to hold his own surprisingly well.

II

Giacomo Meyerbeer, whose proper name was Jakob Liebmann Beer (a legacy from a wealthy relative named Meyer caused him to adopt the name by which he is known today), was born in Berlin September 5, 1791, of Jewish parentage. His father was a wealthy Berlin banker; his mother possessed extraordinary mental and artistic gifts. Meyerbeer was something of a youthful prodigy. At the age of seven he played in public Mozart's Concerto in D Minor for piano and orchestra. Two years later the foremost critics pronounced him to be one of the most accomplished pianists in Berlin. He had also revealed a striking talent for composition, and in consequence was placed under the guidance of competent instructors. Among his friends during this period was Carl Maria von Weber, who was eight years his senior. Despite the difference in their ages, however, a permanent friendship was established between the two. In 1813 his first opera, *Jephtas Gelübde*, was produced at Munich. It wasn't very successful. Meyerbeer had more luck with a comic opera, *Die beiden Kalifen*, which so pleased the public at Stuttgart that the manager of the Kärntnerthor Theatre in Vienna decided to produce the piece. Several months later, Meyerbeer, after a period of intensive preparation and study, made his first appearance in Vienna as a pianist. Despite his great success, he preferred to develop his creative abilities. On the advice of Salieri, who told him that all he needed to succeed was freedom from scholastic shackles and a better knowledge of the human voice, he went to Italy.

He arrived in Venice in 1815, just at the time that Rossini was enjoying tremendous popularity. Hearing Rossini's *Tancredi*, Meyerbeer was enchanted with its joyous melodies and genial charm, and immediately set to work to compose operas in the Italian style. His pronounced gift for quick, thorough assimilation of any sub-

ject, apparent throughout the course of his career, served him well at this time, and his success, as Grove's says, was "easy and complete."

His German friends, however, looked upon his Italian triumphs lugubriously. So sudden and complete a change in his original style, they said, was a degradation of his talent. Weber, in particular, who had set great store in Meyerbeer's ability to make German opera into something fine and praiseworthy, was distressed immeasurably. "My heart bleeds," he wrote, "to see a German composer of creative power stoop to become an imitator in order to win favor with the crowd." Their friendship, however, remained unimpaired, and Meyerbeer, indeed, soon tired of the Italian style—his "wild oats" he called his Italian ventures in later years.

Next he went to Paris, where he spent most of the remainder of his life. Becoming interested in French character, history and art, he made an exhaustive study of the subject, and this resulted later in the creation of the works by which he is best known today. About this time his association with the librettist Eugène Scribe began. In 1831 *Robert le Diable* was produced and at once made the fortune of the Paris Opéra. *Huguenots*, which followed in 1836, though at first somewhat coolly received, was ultimately judged to be the superior of the two.

In 1838 Scribe gave him the book of the *Africaine*, and work on this opera occupied Meyerbeer, at different intervals, the rest of his life. *Le Prophète*, produced at Paris in 1849, was fairly successful. Subsequent works added little to his fame, and his declining years were made miserable through ill health. On *Africaine* he expended an enormous amount of energy, but the work was not produced until April, 1865, about a year after his death. It is considered the most effective and convincing of his works.

III

Of Meyerbeer's relations to Wagner, so much has already been said that it is scarcely necessary to bring the matter up again. The old order of Wagnerians, who saw only evil, and plenty of it, in Nietzsche, Minna and Meyerbeer, seem either to have reached a saner and more balanced viewpoint or else to have passed out of existence altogether. At any rate, not much is heard from them today. The open-minded reader of *Mein Leben*, despite Wagner's pious expressions of innocence, can hardly blame Meyerbeer alone for the various differences that arose between the two men.

In *Mein Leben*, indeed, Wagner, in describing some of his visits to Meyerbeer, writes with unconscious humor—some of the most entertaining and revealing to be found in the entire sprawling two volumes, in fact. He thus describes his first meeting with Meyerbeer, during the disastrous first visit to Paris. He had brought with him the libretto of *Rienzi*, which he insisted on reading, and Meyerbeer, always polite if insincere, had "really listened up to the third act. He kept the two acts that were complete, saying that he wished to look them over, and assured me, when I again called on him, of his whole-hearted interest in my work. Be that as it may, it annoyed me somewhat that he should again and again fall back on praising my minute handwriting, an accomplishment he considered especially Saxonian."

And again, describing a visit to Meyerbeer in Berlin: ". . . Meyerbeer, . . . I found, regarded my coming to Berlin as over hasty. Nevertheless, he behaved in a

kind and friendly manner, only regretting that he was just on the point of 'going away,' a state in which I always found him whenever I visited him again in Berlin."

On another visit to Paris, Wagner visited Schlesinger's music shop.

The only person there to give me a friendly welcome was the old clerk, Monsieur Henri. After I had talked to him in loud tones for some time, as the shop was apparently empty, he at length asked me with some embarrassment whether I had not seen my master (*voire maître*) Meyerbeer.

"Is Monsieur Meyerbeer here?" I asked.

"Certainly," was the even more embarrassed reply; "quite near, over there behind the desk."

And, sure enough, as I walked across to the desk Meyerbeer came out, covered with confusion. He smiled and made some excuse about pressing proof-sheets. He had been hiding there quietly for over ten minutes since first hearing my voice.

From all this it is pretty obvious that Wagner was something of a nuisance. Our sympathies somehow incline toward the lesser of the two men. Neither was an angel, and after all the only thing that really matters today is that the one wrote, at his incomparable best, superlatively well, and the other, at his none too impressive best, only moderately well.

IV

But if Meyerbeer was no Wagner, neither, on the other hand, was he such a sweet and highly perfumed one as, say, Massenet, mincing prettily and dripping with an apparently inexhaustible supply of sentimental nonsense. Crude, bombastic, noisy and vulgar: these qualities are pretty nearly always present, sometimes shrewdly disguised, sometimes flaunted brazenly, in Meyerbeer's music. But in almost everything he wrote there is, as there is in Wagner's Overture to *Rienzi* (modelled, incidentally, on the Meyerbeer plan), a certain coarse energy and homely strength that are not wholly mean and despicable.

And occasionally Meyerbeer wrote uncommonly well and with disarming charm and persuasiveness. The seizing brilliance and grace of his ballet music and the pomp and luxurious grandeur of his marches make up, in part, for the dull emptiness and tawdry showiness of his other music. The trouble with Meyerbeer, of course, lies more in the man than in the musician. The balance between the two was unhappy. The one was not sufficiently rich and abundant to fertilize the other. This disaster is quite common, and for evidence we have only to examine most of the second- and third-rate music of the world. Meyerbeer, then, can be sampled only occasionally, and then only in times of prosperity, ease and serenity. Hearing him in periods of stress, mental, physical or economical, is not very rewarding, and probably, for most of us, downright impossible.

Some of Meyerbeer's finest passages are contained in the discs listed at the conclusion of this article. Dr. Blech and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra have made available a varied and well-selected group of Meyerbeer records. All of them are recommendable, both for fine playing and extraordinarily realistic recording. The others, by different artists, are not all so meritorious, and should be submitted to a rigorous examination before being admitted to any reputable library.

That Meyerbeer is headed unerringly for oblivion is pretty certain, but there is

still time, before the final farewell, to enjoy certain of his works. That, it can be stated without the slightest exaggeration, can best be done by means of the increasingly useful phonograph.

THE RECORDS

The Huguenots: Overture and Ballet Music. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc (V-AN422). \$1.75.

The Huguenots: Overture. Two sides. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Julius Prüwer. One 12-inch disc (PD-19898). \$1.50.

The Huguenots: Benediction of the Poignards. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Leo Blech. Soloist: Anton Baumann. One 12-inch disc (V-C1861). \$1.75.

The Huguenots: Act 1—Noble Sirs, I Salute You! One side and *The Prophet*: Act 5—Prison Scene. One side. Sigrid Onegin (Contralto) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc (V-7146). \$2.

The Prophet: Coronation March. One side and *Athalia*: War March of the Priests. (Mendelssohn) One side. New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg. One 12-inch disc (V-7104). \$2.

The Prophet: Coronation March. One side and *Lorely*: Dance of the Waves. (Catalani) One side. La Scala Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli. One 12-inch disc (C-50200D). \$1.25.

The Prophet: Coronation March. One side and *Toreador et Andalouse*. (Rubinstein) One side. Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Julius Prüwer. One 12-inch disc (B-90031). \$1.50.

The Prophet: Ah! My Son! One side and *Orfeo ed Euridice*: Che farò senza Euridice. (Gluck.) One side. Sigrid Onegin (Contralto) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc (V-6803). \$2.

Robert the Devil: Overture. One side and *La Juive*: Introduction. (Halévy) One side. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc (V-EH371). \$1.75.

Robert the Devil: March and Ballet Music. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc (V-EH307). \$1.75.

Robert the Devil: Invocation. One side and *Le Caid*: Air du tambour Major. (Thomas) One side. Ezio Pinza (Bass) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc (V-6710). \$2.

L'Africaine: Vorspiel. One side and *The Prophet*: Quadrille. One side. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc (V-EH305). \$1.75.

L'Africaine: Indischer Marsch. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc (V-EH306). \$1.75.

L'Africaine: O Paradiso. One side and *Martha*: M'appari. (Flotow) One side. Beniamino Gigli (Tenor) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc (V-7109). \$2.

L'Africaine: Adamastor re dell' acque. One side and *Andrea Chenier*: Nemico della patria. (Giordano.) One side. Titta Ruffo (Baritone) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc (V-7153). \$2.

Torch Dance in B Major. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc (V-EH348). \$1.75.

Torchlight Dance No. 1. Victor Brass Ensemble. One side and (1) *Souvenir*. (Drdla) (2) *Serenade*. (Drigo) One side. Florentine Quartet. One 10-inch disc (V-20637). 75c.

Dinorah: Ombra leggiera. Two sides. Amelita Galli-Curci (Soprano) with orchestra. One 10-inch disc (V-1174). \$1.50.

ORCHESTRA



BEETHOVEN { **SYMPHONY NO. 5 in C Minor.** Two sides. Philadelphia
V-L7001 { Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski.
One 12-inch long-playing disc. \$4.50.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 1.

This is the first of the new RCA Victor program transcriptions. Nine times out of ten the choice for request programs, and always held in vast esteem by the box office, it is fitting and understandable that Beethoven's Fifth Symphony should have been selected as the first major composition to be recorded the new way. For not only is it one of the most popular musical compositions of the better sort ever written; it also happens to possess an abundance of those qualities, whatever they may be (plenty of authorities have had their say about them), that contribute toward giving a composition somewhat more than its proper share of affection from musicians and music lovers alike.

It is, moreover, also fitting and understandable that the artists who were entrusted with the playing of the work should have been Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra. No other symphony orchestra and conductor—at least in America—have done more toward spreading and increasing musical appreciation through the medium of phonograph records; no other symphonic organization has obtained more signal recording results; and, finally, it seems to be fairly commonly agreed that the Philadelphia Orchestra is second to none.

There will, of course, be those who will deplore the choice of the rather too familiar Fifth for the first long-playing record; but it is an objection that doesn't hold water. The motives that dictated the selection of the Fifth are readily apparent, and it is easy to sympathize with them. Besides, Victor needs a good Fifth Symphony in its catalogue, and in any case there will be plenty of time for Stokowski and his men to record less familiar works once the long-playing record becomes solidly established.

The first movement and most of the second are on the first side of the disc. The balance of the second and the third and fourth movements are on the reverse. The break in the second movement, while unfortunate, was unavoidable, and luckily it is not objectionable. How does the recording compare with that in this orchestra's standard records? That is the question in which collectors will be most interested. It can be answered quite easily and briefly: the recording at the first hearing seemed to be as fine a piece of orchestral reproduction as we have ever heard. In no other record we can think of at the moment is there a greater range of volume, nor recording more balanced and accurate: the soft passages are marvelously soft, recorded with unbelievable clarity and delicacy; the loud passages are impressively loud. There is very little surface noise, and even in the softest parts it is scarcely noticeable. Subsequent hearings, of course, may reveal flaws undetected at first, but it is hardly likely that they will be of much consequence. There is, moreover, another striking quality about this record that, though difficult



to describe, is felt shortly after it gets under way. You get the unmistakable impression that the musicians and conductor were playing as they play in concert—that is, without the strain under which they must labor when faced with the microphone and the necessity to stop every three or four minutes. It is a feeling of ease and unhampered freedom, and you sense it throughout both sides of the disc. The musicians and conductor, for once, were devoting their entire energies to the music, oblivious to the microphone and other such unmusical exigencies.

As for the interpretation, it is a distinguished one, balanced, sensitive and well-planned, ranking with this same conductor's records of Beethoven's Seventh. Stokowski himself was greatly impressed with the success of the undertaking. His remarks are worth quoting. "The day after the C Minor Symphony of Beethoven was recorded by the new method," he said, "we heard the complete symphony from the proof pressings and after the symphony was ended I realized that I had forgotten where I was, so intense was the state of feeling and so sustained was the mood created. Now that the longest movement of a symphony can be played without interruption, recorded music can offer one of the best ways to listen to music, because the ideal time and place can be chosen, so that the beauty and inspiration of the music can enter deeply into the soul of the listener."

Never before, it is safe to say, has recorded music come so close to achieving a vivid and realistic duplication of the best features of the concert hall. The record is a resounding triumph for both the artists and the manufacturers; it should be heard by all interested in any way in the development of recorded music.

BEETHOVEN

B-90189

to

B-90194

SYMPHONY NO. 6 in F Major ("*Pastoral*"), Op. 68. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hans Pfitzner. Eleven sides and

ADAGIO in B Flat Major (From "*Street Song*" Trio), Op. 11. One side. Munich Chamber Trio (Clarinet, 'Cello and Piano). Six 12-inch discs in album. Brunswick Set No. 26. \$9.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 3.

Since the Spring of 1930, when Brunswick began issuing each month repressings from the Polydor catalogue, the company has devoted considerable attention to Beethoven, and now has a distinguished collection available that, in quality if not in quantity, is unsurpassed. To the previously issued albums of the Second, *Eroica*, Fifth and Ninth Symphonies, the *Pastoral* Symphony is now added; and it may be said at once that it is one of the most successful recordings of a Beethoven symphony that has yet appeared on records. It is one of those rare instances when recording, performance and interpretation are all on a superior level.

In this description and glorification of nature, Beethoven sought not only to put something of the outdoors in music, but also to express his profound love for the countryside, where perhaps he spent some of the happiest moments of his turbulent life. Though preliminary sketches for the Symphony date back to 1806, actual work on the piece did not begin until the following year. At the time of the composition of the Symphony, Beethoven was living in the country between Heiligenstadt and Grinzing, near Vienna. The original title of the Symphony was

Sinfonia caratteristica or *Recollections of Country Life*, but this was later changed to *Pastoral* Symphony. In order to make it plain that the work was not bound by any definite program, Beethoven retained the caption: "More an expression of feeling than a tone-picture."



The first movement ("Awakening of Joyful Feelings on Arrival in the Country"), with its shepherd's call and suggestion of woodpeckers, achieves an authentically rustic atmosphere; and a sense of peace and contentment, such as, theoretically at least, one should have when reaching the country, is skilfully conveyed. In the second movement ("Scene by the Brook"), the orchestra suggests bird calls: the nightingale by the flute, the quail by the oboe, and the cuckoo by the clarinet. Nor is the brook itself neglected; its murmurs and trickling are heard throughout the movement. The third movement ("Village Festival") is a peasant dance. Toward the end its jolly measures are interrupted by a forbidding rumble, and the fourth movement, depicting a storm, begins. After a suitable amount of noise, obtained quite ingeniously and with relatively simple means, the storm subsides, and the Finale ("The Shepherd's Hymn—Thanksgiving After the Storm") closes the work on an appropriately peaceful note.

Elsewhere in this issue (in the Correspondence Column), a subscriber, Mr. R. F. McGraw, laments the passing from the pages of *Disques* of what he generously terms a "Utopian state of reviewing." It is our "reprehensible" practice now, he charges, to acclaim the latest recording of a composition as the best version available, whether it actually is or not. The reason for this change of policy, he hints, may be the depression, for which so many evils are nowadays blamed. By loudly praising, with cynical disregard for its real worth, the latest recording of a work, we thus confuse the record buyer, causing him first to become dissatisfied with his old version and then to rush out and purchase the latest. And in support of his charge, Mr. McGraw compiles a formidable amount of evidence. While it is scarcely necessary to say that no such policy as our correspondent describes has been adopted, nor even considered, as, in fact, the fifth paragraph of his letter would imply, Mr. McGraw's accusation, nonetheless, makes it somewhat embarrassing for us to have to greet this new recording of the *Pastoral* as the best available.

And yet that is precisely what the merits of the set compel us to do, regardless of how suspicious it may appear. Pfitzner's reading of the *Pastoral* is held in high esteem in Germany; now, by means of these records, it is possible to understand why. His conducting is not unfamiliar to record collectors, for several of his recordings, including the *Eroica* Symphony, have been issued by Brunswick; but in this set of the *Pastoral* he gives what is far and away the finest performance we have yet had from him on records. Indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a more vivid and revealing interpretation of the *Pastoral*. Pfitzner maintains throughout a very leisurely and comfortable pace, and this, far from being dull, brings out many hitherto unsuspected felicities in the score. Beethoven's naïve imitations of the sounds of nature are deftly treated, but there is no suggestion of exaggeration. Such a superlatively admirable interpretation of the work is bound to re-awaken interest in the Symphony. The recording, too, is noteworthy, reproducing the fine performance by the Berlin State Opera Orchestra with rare fidelity.

A movement from the *Street Song* Trio fills out the album acceptably.



**RAVEL
DEBUSSY**

V-7413

and

V-7414

LA VALSE: *Choreographic Poem*. (Ravel) Three sides and
DANSE. (Debussy—Orchestrated by Ravel) One side. Boston
Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitzky.
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

RAVEL

V-W1163

and

V-W1164

IMPORTED

LE TOMBEAU DE COUPERIN: (a) *Prélude*. (b) *Forlane*.
(c) *Menuet*. (d) *Rigaudon*. Four sides. Société des Concerts
du Conservatoire conducted by Piero Coppola.
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Now that the quarrels over the respective merits and demerits of the various versions of Ravel's *Bolero* have at long last subsided, the new releases of the same composer's *La Valse* promise to provide likely material for similar arguments. *La Valse*, indeed, has been recorded even more frequently than has the *Bolero*. In addition to the two early versions—Coates' for Victor and Gaubert's for Columbia,—whose age is belied by the excellence of the recording, there are two new releases of the work to be considered: Albert Wolff's Brunswick set (reviewed here last month) and this new Victor set by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. (Pierre Monteux has also recently recorded the work—for French H. M. V.—but we haven't as yet had an opportunity to hear the records.)

Koussevitzky, of course, has the advantage of leading what is by all odds the finest band that has yet recorded *La Valse*. The beauty of the Boston Orchestra's tone and the excellence of the various instrumental solos greatly enhance the value of his set. Koussevitzky, moreover, makes the most of his players' skill; his interpretation, polished, refined and worked over to the *n*th degree, brings out many little details that either were obscured or hurried over in the other versions. But this excessive polishing has its disadvantages, too, for if *La Valse* is, as one commentator has put it, a "dance on a volcano," then this is suggested far more vividly in Coates' early Victor set. As Koussevitzky plays it, *La Valse* sounds like a somewhat tipsy and sentimental waltz; in Coates' less graceful and more forthright version there is implied more of the threat, warning, anguish and gloom that many find in the score. As for the other two versions, Gaubert seems to be on the side of Koussevitzky, and Wolff on that of Coates . . . Like the *Sarabande* which filled out the Boston Orchestra's set of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the *Danse* which occupies the fourth side of this set was originally written for piano by Debussy, and later, at the request of Koussevitzky, orchestrated by Ravel. Written in 1890 when Debussy was twenty-eight years old, the *Danse* thus belongs to the same period as the *Suite Bergamasque* and *Valse Romantique*. It is beautifully played and recorded.

Since the excitement aroused by the *Bolero* several years ago, the recording companies have outdone themselves in putting out Ravel recordings. Many of these discs, of course, turned out to be duplications of recordings already available, but some of his less familiar works appeared, too, and among these latter may be placed *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, a composition, in fact, that hasn't been on the programs of our leading symphony orchestras for several years. In its original form, completed about the time of the outbreak of the War, the *Tombeau de Couperin*

was written for pianoforte and consisted of six numbers. In 1919 four of the numbers (the Fugue and Toccata of the piano version were omitted) were orchestrated. The first American performance of *Le Tombeau de Couperin* in its new form was by the Boston Symphony Orchestra on November 19, 1920.



Delicate harmonies, charming melodies, and the grace and piquancy with which the whole work is written—these make *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (which leaves the hearer with much the same impression as does Richard Strauss' *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*) excellent recording material. Coppola and his men give a delightful performance. The recording could scarcely be better.

**PICK-MANGIAGALLI
CASELLA**
V-AW243
IMPORTED

LA DANZA D'OLAF: *Suite*. (Pick-Mangiagalli) One side and
LE COUVENT SUR L'EAU: (*Convento Veneziano*). (a)
Pas de Vieilles Dames. (b) *Ronde d'Enfants*. (Casella) One
side. La Scala Orchestra conducted by Ettore Panizza.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.

COPPOLA
V-L855
IMPORTED

DEUX DANSES SYMPHONIQUES: (a) *Blues*. (b)
Habanera. Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Piero
Coppola. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

MARTUCCI
O-E5113
IMPORTED

NOVELLETTA: *Sinfonia*. Two sides. Milan Symphony Or-
chestra conducted by A. Guarnieri. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Riccardo Pick-Mangiagalli, born at Strakonitz, Bohemia, July 10, 1882, is a naturalized Italian. He was graduated from the Milan Conservatory in 1903. "Pick-Mangiagalli," says Lawrence Gilman in his Philharmonic-Symphony program notes, "does not affiliate with the more venturesome of the so-called 'Younger Italian' school—with such experimentalists in new methods and effects as Casella and Malipiero. He is disposed rather toward the traditional ways of Richard Strauss, Dukas, Rimsky-Korsakoff, and the earlier Stravinsky (the Stravinsky of *L'Oiseau de Feu*); though sometimes he swings far back into the past, and reminds us of Wagner, or even of Grieg." The *Danza d'Olaf*, occupying one side of the first of these discs, does not offer anything violently contradictory to this estimate. It is attractive music, neatly played and recorded.

Casella's *Le Couvent sur l'eau* is a fairly early work, dating from 1911-12. The excerpts given here are no more upsetting to orthodox ears than the Pick-Mangiagalli piece. They are vividly orchestrated and the effects come off with great success. Neither Casella nor Pick-Mangiagalli is represented very generously in the record catalogues—the former with excerpts from *La Giara* and the latter with *I Piccoli Soldati*, *Notturmo*, and *Rondo Fantastico*—so that the disc offers a pleasant departure from the beaten paths. La Scala Orchestra plays skilfully, and the recording is as good as the best we get nowadays.

Piero Coppola, though several of his works have been recorded, is more favorably known to collectors as a conductor. In his *Deux Danses Symphoniques*, he turns to America for a *Blues*, and to Spain for a *Habanera*. Both reveal highly dexterous scoring, but little else. Of the two, the *Blues* is the more attractive. Both num-



bers are well recorded.

A great commotion was aroused last May when Arturo Toscanini irritated the Fascisti by refusing to conduct patriotic anthems at concerts in Bologna in commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of Giuseppe Martucci's birth. One highly esteemed American conductor, indeed, who, in his published autobiography, applauded the attacks on Karl Muck in a similar incident some years ago, waxed highly indignant and roundly denounced the insult to Toscanini . . . Martucci was born at Capua in 1856 and died at Naples in 1909. A salient figure in the musical life of the Italy of his period, he composed a quantity of orchestral and chamber music. The work given here makes fine recording material; ingeniously orchestrated and full of felicitous melodies, it suggests the thought that we ought to have more of the composer's works on records.

**HUMPER-
DINCK**

V-AW242

IMPORTED

HÄNSEL AND GRETEL: *Prelude*. Two sides. New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 1101.

A well-recorded version of Humperdinck's *Hänsel and Gretel* Prelude has been badly needed. It is a charming piece of work, modelled, it is true, along Wagnerian lines, but so dexterously that the resemblance adds to rather than detracts from the worth of the music. Though the Prelude has been attempted several times, none of the versions with which we are familiar has been altogether satisfactory. Albert Coates' early electrical recording for Victor was perhaps the most successful; an excellent interpretation, it was unfortunately marred somewhat by indifferent recording. The chief merit of this disc of Mengelberg's lies in the clarity and crispness of the reproduction, which show off the Philharmonic-Symphony to excellent advantage. But the rather heavy and plodding reading is less gratifying; more lightness and sparkle would have helped out immensely. Mengelberg is too serious, and his interpretation, in consequence, lacks Coates' genial humor. Yet it is, all things considered, a good record, and because of the excellence of the recording is recommended as the best disc of the Prelude now available. Though recorded by Victor several years ago—presumably in Carnegie Hall—when Mengelberg was one of the conductors of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, the disc receives its first release by the Italian branch of H. M. V.

STRAWINSKY

C-67962D

to

C-67964D

SYMPHONIE DE PSAUMES for *Orchestra and Chorus*. Six sides. L'Orchestre des Concerts Straram and Alexis Vlassoff Chorus conducted by Igor Strawinsky. Three 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 162. \$6.

Columbia has been doing notable service in making available Strawinsky's works, and to the *Capriccio*, issued last Spring, it adds this month a first-rate recording of the *Symphonie de Psalms*, certainly one of the most important releases in many months. Both works were played for the first time in America by the Boston Symphony Orchestra last season, and both, like most of Strawinsky's works, received a gratifying amount of publicity. The *Symphonie de Psalms* is the subject of an article by Joseph Cottler, published elsewhere in this issue.

WEINBERGER
B-90196

SCHWANDA, THE BAG-PIPE PLAYER: (1) *Introduction*. (2) *Polka*. (3) *Furiant*. (4) *Ballad*. (5) *Polka*. (6) *Song of Dorotka*. (7) *Finale*. Two sides. Opera Orchestra, Berlin-Charlottenburg, conducted by Alois Melichar. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.



Jaromir Weinberger's *Schwanda*, having been produced in more than eighty German theatres in the last four years, will at last reach America this Fall, when the Metropolitan Opera will produce the piece as one of its novelties. The alert Brunswick Company, reversing the usual policy of the recording companies, which is to issue a recording of a work after it has been produced and not before, releases this month a repressing of various selections from the opera. The *Polka* and *Furiant* have already been heard by audiences of the Philadelphia and Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestras, and there are imported records by Blech and Weissmann giving selections from the opera.

Weissmann's record was reviewed on page 309 of the October, 1930, issue of *Disques*, when brief notes on the composer and music were included. Said to have been derived from primitive Bohemian folk-music, the tunes are fresh and colorful, and they are orchestrated with considerable ingenuity. The performance here is spirited enough, but lacks distinction; and the recording, in places, is neither so smooth nor clear as it might be.

MÉHUL
B-90195

LE JEUNE HENRI: *Overture*. Two sides. Lamoureux Orchestra conducted by Albert Wolff. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

Le Jeune Henri was produced in 1797, but outside of the *Overture* little is heard of the opera nowadays. One of the curiosities of the *Overture* is the use of the *Cor de chasse* (hunting horn or simple harmonic horn in D) for rendering a fanfare. The tone of the *Cor de chasse* is rather coarse and raucous, but Méhul uses the instrument skilfully, and the effect is very picturesque. The Lamoureux Orchestra gives a spirited interpretation, and the recording, as is generally the case with this band's records, is extremely good.

FLOTOW
C-G50302D

ALESSANDRO STRADELLA: *Overture*. Two sides. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Weissmann. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The music is tuneful, if a bit noisy. Dr. Weissmann's performance is lively, and the recording is good.

TSCHAIKOWSKY
V-AN382
IMPORTED

STRING SERENADE in C Major, Op. 48. (a) *Waltz*. (b) *Finale on Russian Themes*. Two sides. Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

The *Elegie* from the *String Serenade* has already been recorded by the Philadelphia Chamber String Simfionietta, so that these two additional numbers, excellently played and recorded, should be welcomed by admirers of Tschaikowsky.

**STRAWINSKY**

O-123.667

IMPORTED

SUITE NO. 2 for *Small Orchestra*: (a) *Marche*; (b) *Valse*; (c) *Polka*; (d) *Galop*. Two sides. Colonne Orchestra conducted by Gabriel Pierné. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 295.

ROUSSEL

V-W1131

and

V-W1132

IMPORTED

SUITE IN FA: (a) *Prélude*; (b) *Sarabande*; (c) *Gigue*. Three sides and

LA NAISSANCE DE LA LYRE: *Danse des Nymphes*. One side. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Piero Coppola.

Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

The exigencies of current reviewing make strange press-bed fellows.

The Strawinsky release is an old joke arranged for chamber orchestra. Some fifteen years ago it was originally published for piano and a dozen fingers. That is, before its composition there had been two hand and four hand pieces. Whereupon Strawinsky started us off on a three hand literature, with the third hand using only two fingers. That's the first element in the joke. (Since then we have acquired a repertory for two fists.) Then the subject matter: the country fiddler sort of thing, solemnly scraping a cheap dance tune, out of tune, off key, umpah, umpah. It is a *genre* number—march, waltz, polka, galop—of red fat faces and hobnail boots. You can see why in the first place this caricature should have been orchestrated. The humor broadens when the fiddler becomes a German street band with its shrilling clarinet, florid flute, and grunting tuba. It is quite funny, especially the waltz, which might be danced by Harold Lloyd and Mrs. Jiggs. The wit is successful and suggests that in the days before polyharmony, though there could be gaiety, there could be no risible humor. What would Beethoven, when he wrote the *Rondo Caprice on a Lost Penny*, have done with the present extension in technique?

The Roussel suite is characteristic in being the production of one who has given the critics trouble in classifying him. There was some talk of his being in sympathy with a dissonant spirit of the notorious Groupe des Six, of his being primarily a musician for the stage, of his orientalism, of his impressionism. But all these seem to be fixations of singular facets of his work. The fact is that he is remarkably versatile and not at all hidebound. Roussel is a scholar to whom all ways are fair, if they are expressive.

For instance, when he has a group of ideas to exhibit, too various for the symphonic poem, too lyrical in mood for the involvements of symphonic structure, history furnishes him a plausible medium in the form of the eighteenth century suite. Endowed, moreover, with the French ideals of clarity and wit, he finds the old form essential: *Suite en Fa*.

But for the volume of a modern orchestra at maximum energy, "stepped up" by brilliant harmonies, an occasional chromatic ornament and the syncopated chords that mark the central climax of the movement, the Prelude could be mistaken for an Allegro two hundred years old. It has the same weaving motive and playful spirit. The remaining two movements, however, are queer mates for the classic Prelude. The Sarabande, always the chance for sentiment in the

evening's suite of dances, recalls that when Roussel was a youth, no one had a greater vogue in France than Massenet. *La Naissance de la Lyre*, which fills out the fourth side of the set, is similar in its melodious sentiment. The Gigue, now, is something else again: the jiggling of Debussy's fawn, unless, with the entry of the brass, you rather imagine Brünnhilde. Here is versatility verging on inconsistency.

Roussel is one of those excellent men who create no tempests, either in teapots or skies, but who carry on comfortably the traditions of their art.

JOSEPH COTTLER

CHARPENTIER

O-170.125

to

O-170.127

IMPORTED

COURONNEMENT DE LA MUSE DU PEUPLE. Six sides. Grand Odéon Orchestra conducted by Gustave Charpentier. Three 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

We are indebted to the composer for the following notes regarding this odd work: "The Feast of the *Muse du Peuple* was written in 1897. The first coronation was the one of the *Muse de Montmartre*. Then, in succession, followed those of Lille, Paris (1898), Le Mans, Bordeaux (1899), St. Etienne, Beziers, Marseille, Limoges, Lens, Amiens, Somain, Alger and others. The last one was held July 20, 1930, at Ville de Fresnay-sur-Sarthe, at the Théâtre de Verdure des Rochers.

"These celebrations, in effect, are a glorification of the popular virtues, and their purpose is to draw the artists nearer the people, from whom they tend to draw away. The people assist in the celebration by joining in the choruses and by dancing. The dancers employed in the festival are working girls, formerly in the Conservatoire de Mimi Pinson. A Muse is selected from the young working girls of the city in which the festival is held."

The *Couronnement de la Muse du Peuple* consists of two parts. The first comprises ten scenes: *Prélude*, *March du Cortège de la Muse*, *Les Crieurs Publics*, *Prologue*, *Ballet du Plaisir*, *Apparition de la Beauté*, *Le Poète*, *Couronnement de la Muse*, *La Souffrance Humaine* and *Choeur d'Allegresse*. The second part, for soli and chorus, is entitled *Chant d'Apothéose*.

The recorded excerpts from the work offer, first, number two of part one (*Marche du Cortège de la Muse*); second, number five (*Ballet du Plaisir*); third, number nine (*La Souffrance Humaine*); and, last, a fragment from the second part, *Chant d'Apothéose*.

The music may be admirably adapted for the festivals M. Charpentier describes, which are generally held in the open-air, but it does not lend itself so readily to recording purposes. It seems somewhat clumsily constructed and raucous, but perhaps, since it was intended for the large, not too discriminating crowds that commonly attend festivals, it was meant to be thus. The titles of the various sections recorded are sufficiently explanatory. The playing is vigorous but none too good, and much the same can be said of the recording, which is loud and full but somewhat coarse. The records are carelessly turned out.



CONCERTO

CHOPIN
V-7404
to
V-7407

CONCERTO NO. 2 in *F Minor*, Op. 21. Arthur Rubinstein (Piano) and London Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli. Seven sides and

WALTZ in *C Sharp Minor*, Op. 64, No. 2. One side. Arthur Rubinstein (Piano).

Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-110. \$8.

Chopin may be losing favor in some quarters, but certainly the monthly supplements issued by the various recording companies would not indicate any such shifting of tastes. That he must still retain much of his popularity is amply demonstrated by the quantity of recordings of his music that has been made available in the past couple of months.

Both of the piano concertos have been recorded, and both, in fact, are now available in two versions. The *F Minor*, though perhaps less popular than the First, seems thus far to be far and away the more successful on records. Brailowsky's interpretation of the First met with some criticism, and Rosenthal's version, though well-played, was seriously damaged by very inferior recording. But if the First is the more popular of the two, the Second, which Huneker considered "altogether more human than the *E Minor*," seems destined to fare better with most record collectors, since both versions of the Second enjoy extremely fine interpretations and first-rate recording.

The Second still sounds uncommonly fresh and appealing. The youthful vigor of the first movement and the lively Finale, when the performer is as good as Rubinstein is, are immensely charming. Comparison between Rubinstein's interpretation and Marguerite Long's (recorded for and issued by Columbia about a year ago) will no doubt be inevitable. The differences, however, are not of much consequence. The new set certainly offers nothing to make owners of the Long album regret their choice; rather, it is something of a tribute to Rubinstein to say that his version measures up to the high standard set by Mlle. Long. Both artists are excellent pianists, and both are well-endowed, technically and temperamentally, to play Chopin in an eminently satisfactory manner. Mlle. Long's version, perhaps, is the more sensitive, poetic and deeply felt; the exquisite beauty and understanding with which she plays the slow movement, moreover, contrast very effectively with the life and spirit which she puts into her reading of the Finale. Rubinstein's interpretation is the more brilliant and lively, and the obvious gusto with which he plays the work may appeal to some more than Mlle. Long's romantic and less showy version.

John Barbirolli and the London Symphony Orchestra supply a vigorous and well-rounded background for Rubinstein. The recording is clear, full and nicely balanced, and the piano comes out very credibly . . . On the odd side of the set, Rubinstein gives a graceful rendition of the Waltz in *C Sharp Minor*.

CHAMBER MUSIC



BEETHOVEN

V-8196
to
V-8200

TRIO NO. 7 in B Flat Major (*The "Archduke"*), Op. 97. Ten sides. Alfred Cortot (Piano), Jacques Thibaud (Violin) and Pablo Casals ('Cello).
Five 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-92. \$12.50.

The Cortot-Thibaud-Casals recorded collaborations haven't been so numerous as one could wish in the past couple of years, so that it is excellent news that Victor has repressed one of their most successful efforts: Beethoven's *Archduke* Trio.

The *Archduke* belongs to what is generally considered Beethoven's second period, those extraordinarily rich and abundant years that brought forth so many great masterpieces. Defiance, force, strength, individuality, good humor and unflinching mastery of his materials—these are the things one finds in the salient works of the second period, and, similarly, these are the things one finds in the *Archduke*. Human emotions, hitherto but crudely suggested in music, found in these works direct and effective musical expression. The Trio derives its name from the fact that it was dedicated to the Archduke Rudolph, who was greatly interested in the work. Composed during the Winter of 1810-11, it was written down in finished form between March 3 and 26, 1811. Spohr, who was present at one of the rehearsals at which the deaf Beethoven presided at the piano, wrote afterwards:

It was not a treat, for, in the first place, the pianoforte was badly out of tune, which Beethoven minded little, since he did not hear it; and secondly, there was scarcely anything left of the virtuosity of the artist which had formerly been so greatly admired. In *forte* passages the poor deaf man pounded on the keys till the strings jangled, and in *piano* he played so softly that the music was unintelligible unless one could look into the pianoforte part. I was deeply depressed at so sad a fate. If it is a great misfortune for anyone to be deaf, how shall a musician endure it without giving way to despair. Beethoven's melancholy was no longer a riddle to me.

The writing for the three instruments is fairly evenly distributed throughout the work; though the piano has the dominating part, there are some charming passages for the 'cello and violin. The fire, strength and warmth of the themes, the deftness and skill with which Beethoven manipulates and develops them, the absence, despite the length of the work, of any feeling of monotony—these make the *Archduke* one of the most thoroughly satisfying and interesting in all the literature for this combination of instruments. It is by no means one of the most popular forms—Tschaikowsky, indeed, is said to have detested it, though later he seemed to think somewhat better of it, for he wrote an excellent Trio in memory of his friend, Rubinstein—and in consequence both composition and performers must be of the best in order to sustain interest. It has been pointed out that the opening of the *Archduke* Trio closely resembles the Hero theme of the *Eroica*. Stated by the piano and later taken up by the 'cello and violin, it makes an impressive opening, full of spirit and defiance. Beethoven engages interest at once. In the middle of the movement (beginning of side two) there is an attractive pizzi-



cato section, beautifully done on these records. The Scherzo, though properly lively and vigorous, somehow lacks point; luckily it is comparatively brief. The longest movement is the third, which, like so many of Beethoven's slow movements, is full of an almost intolerable sadness and suffering; yet it is all managed with such admirable restraint that there is no suggestion of the mawkishness and softness that spoil many a lesser composer's flirtations with the gloomier emotions. The Finale, written in the supple, energetic manner of the first movement, closes the work appropriately.

The interpretation is graceful and well-poised. It is doubtful if any three performers now living could give a performance technically so perfect and emotionally so satisfying. The recording, on the whole, is good.



PIANO

**SCHUMANN
PALMGREN**
C-2512D

{ **VOGEL ALS PROPHET.** (Schumann) One side and
CRADLE SONG. (Palmgren) One side. Myra Hess (Piano).
One 10-inch disc. 75c.

This is the first record from Myra Hess in over a year. One of the best-liked of the many pianists who appear before the microphone, it is a pity that she doesn't record more often. Not only is she an excellent pianist; she also manages to pick out interesting and unhackneyed recording material. Moreover, the modest price asked for her discs must have an irresistible appeal for those collectors eternally on the search for rare bargains. Surely, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find more on a record for seventy-five cents than Myra Hess offers. Here she plays an appealing Schumann number, and on the reverse side a composition by a modern Finnish composer, Selim Palmgren, who with this disc apparently enters the domestic catalogues for the first time. The Schumann piece is No. 7 of the nine numbers that comprise *Waldscenen*, Op. 82. The composer of the *Cradle Song* was born at Pori (Björneborg) in 1878. A composer and pianist, Palmgren has given many concerts in Finland and abroad. Among his compositions are an opera, two piano concertos, works for orchestra, a quantity of choral and vocal music, and numerous piano pieces. Since 1923 he has been teacher of composition at the Eastman Conservatory, Rochester, N. Y. The *Cradle Song* is attractive music, quiet and restful, and the interpretation given it, as well as that to the Schumann number, is admirably attuned to the mood of the music. The recording is well done.

CHOPIN
C-67965D
to
C-67972D

{ **TWENTY-SEVEN ETUDES,** *Opp.* 10 and 25 and "*Trois Nouvelles Etudes.*" Sixteen sides. Robert Lortat (Piano).
Eight 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 163. \$12.

The review copies of the records were delayed in reaching us, and so the review will have to be held over until next month.

OPERA



VERDI

C-67973D

to

C-67986D

IL TROVATORE: *Opera in Four Acts.* Twenty-eight sides. Italian Operatic Artists, La Scala Chorus and Milan Symphony Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli. Fourteen 12-inch discs in two albums. Columbia Operatic Set No. 9. \$21.

THE CAST

Leonora.....	Bianca Scacciati
Azucena.....	Giuseppina Zinetti
Manrico.....	Francesco Merli
Count di Luna.....	Enrico Molinari
Ferrando.....	Corrado Zambelli
Ines.....	Ida Mannarini
Ruiz.....	Emilio Venturini
An Aged Gypsy.....	Enzo Arnaldi

This enjoyable group of records, setting forth Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, was reviewed from the imported pressings on page 133 of the May, 1931, issue of *Disques*. As was noted in that review, the recording and performance maintain a high level of excellence, and those fond of the work need have no hesitation in adding it to their collection. The cast, chorus and orchestra, for the most part familiar figures to collectors, are all highly satisfactory.

SULLIVAN

C-2517D

to

C-2522D

THE MIKADO: *Abridged Operetta.* (Gilbert-Sullivan) Twelve sides. Columbia Light Opera Company conducted by Joseph Batten. Six 10-inch discs. 75c each.

This set is planned on a much smaller scale than the D'Oyly Carte albums. No attempt is made at completeness, and only the outstanding numbers are given. Those accustomed to the D'Oyly Carte recordings will probably consider this—save in the matter of recording—a set of indifferent merits. Yet it is scarcely fair to compare it with the more elaborate Gilbert and Sullivan sets, for it is much less expensive. The chorus parts are very good, and some of them are done with commendable verve and animation. The solo parts are less gratifying. The male section of the cast, in particular, is unsatisfactory. There is a too laborious straining apparent, and the singers appear much too self-conscious. Under such heavy treatment Gilbert's sparkling lines and Sullivan's tuneful music seem almost dull. A good orchestra is conducted by Joseph Batten, but in several of the records a piano is used for the accompaniment. The recording throughout is first-rate. The most desirable feature of the set, then, is its modest price. Genuine Gilbert and Sullivan fans will be content with their early electrical D'Oyly Carte version until the same forces are allowed to re-record the operetta, which they surely will sooner or later.

**HONEGGER**

O-238.297

and

O-238.298

and

O-166.390

IMPORTED

LES AVENTURES DU ROI PAUSOLE: (a) *Overture*; (b) *Ballet*; (c) *Air d'Aline*: "Pardon mon papa que j'adore"; (d) *Air d'Aline*: "Papa veut toujours seule, hélas, que je m'amuse"; (e) *Air de la Coupe de Thulé*; (f) *Les Adieux de Pausole*. Six sides. M. Dorville, Mlle. G. Gills and Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arthur Honegger. Three 10-inch discs. \$1.25 each.

Considerable curiosity was aroused not so long ago when it was rumored that Arthur Honegger, beguiled by the possibilities afforded by the musical comedy stage, was engaged in composing the music for such a work. Finally, last Winter, the operetta *Les Aventures du roi Pausole*, with music by the composer of *Roi David* and book by Albert Willemetz, was produced in Paris at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens. The work is adapted from Pierre Louys' well-known novel.

While it is manifestly impossible to form an opinion of the work as a whole from these brief selections, they at least afford some clue as to the manner in which Honegger approached his task. They show that, without sacrificing any of the essentials of his by this time well-known style, he has added good-humor, gaiety and sparkle to his score, and with the utmost taste and skill. Of the excerpts given here, the *Overture*, *Ballet* and the two numbers sung by Mlle. G. Gills are the most interesting—at any rate, they are most suitable for recording purposes. The *Overture*, deftly rendered by a small orchestra under the composer's direction, makes effective use of the woodwinds and brass, and they are similarly employed in the *Ballet*, which, after a slow beginning, concludes brilliantly. The two numbers of the Princess Aline, well-sung by Mlle. Gills, are fresh and appealing. The other selections, one sung by M. Dorville, who takes the part of the amiable Roi Pausole, and the other by Dorville and Mlle. Gills, are not so interesting—not on records, at least. One must know the story and the situation in order to appreciate the humor, and M. Dorville's method of half-singing and half-speaking his lines does not greatly add to the attractiveness of the disc. A small orchestra conducted by the composer furnishes a moderately good accompaniment to these numbers. The recording is fair. If you are curious about Honegger's venture into the field of operetta, these discs will be very desirable; otherwise their appeal is only a mild one.

J. STRAUSS**SUPPÉ**

V-7415

DIE FLEDERMAUS: Act 2—*Csardas*. (J. Strauss) One side and
BOCCACCIO: Act 1—*Hab ich nur deine liebe*. (Suppé) One side. Elisabeth Rethberg (Soprano) with orchestra. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

The attractive *Fledermaus* number is well, if a bit heavily, sung, and there is a good orchestral accompaniment. Suppé's *Boccaccio* was one of the novelties presented by the Metropolitan last year, and it enjoyed a fair amount of success. The selection given here, however, is dull and flat; one of the livelier numbers would have been more attractive on records. But while we have plenty of operatic selections in the catalogues, the field of the Viennese operetta has scarcely been touched by the local companies, and so such a disc is welcome.

VIOLIN



BACH

C-LX127

and

C-LX128

IMPORTED

SONATA No. 1 in G Minor. Four Sides. Joseph Szigeti (Violin). Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Nearly all the great violinists who condescend now and then to record seem to have a contemptuous opinion of the tastes of record collectors. For their phonographic efforts are confined almost exclusively to such things as Dvorák's *Humoresque*, Massenet's *Meditation*, Drdla's *Souvenir* and similar numbers. When their stock of such hackneyed material is exhausted, instead of looking for something more rewarding and better calculated to display their talents favorably, they simply begin all over again, and the dreary process is repeated. Perhaps they confuse the phonograph audience with those who tune in nightly on the radio. Joseph Szigeti, however, is not of that company. He is one of the very few fiddlers with whose choice of recording material it is impossible to quarrel. The most serious objection that can be found with his releases, indeed, is that there are far too few of them.

His playing here is what is sometimes, perhaps rather excessively, termed a sheer delight. Things that are a sheer delight are not often encountered, and so the phrase should be handled discreetly and with some delicacy. In this case, however, it seems reasonably safe to employ it. The noble tone Szigeti coaxes from his fiddle and the majestic music are beyond criticism. Bach's six sonatas for solo violin date from 1720. No. 1, like Nos. 3 and 5, is in regular four movement sonata form, while Nos. 2, 4 and 6 resemble more the dance form of the suite and partita. Two of these works were released last Winter: No. 4 in D Minor, played by Adolf Busch, and No. 5 in C Major, played by Yehudi Menuhin. They were reviewed on page 450 of the January, 1931, issue.

No. 1 begins with a broad, expansive Adagio. This is followed by a rugged, two-voice Fugue, impressively played by Szigeti. The slow, melodious Siciliana, coming between the towering Fugue and the brilliant Presto, which closes the work, offers a striking contrast. The recording is extremely good, reproducing the tone of the violin with commendable accuracy and with no suggestion of distortion. This is a set not only for violinists but for all who like the violin; their taste for such music has not been effectively satisfied by the phonograph thus far, and so it is highly probable that to them these two records will be indispensable.

MOZART

C-2507D

RONDO. (Mozart-Kreisler) Two sides. René Benedetti (Violin) with piano accompaniment by Maurice Faure. One 10-inch disc. 75c.

Supported by Maurice Faure's nicely balanced piano accompaniment, René Benedetti fiddles very deftly and spiritedly. The recording is excellent.

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Brunswick



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| 85004 | SCHUBERT —AM MEER aus dem LIEDERZYKLUS:
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Piano Accompaniment by Franz Rupp | Recorded in Europe
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LYDE (*from "Etudes Latines"*). One side. Ninon Vallin (Soprano) with piano accompaniment by Reynaldo Hahn.
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V-AM2911

and

V-AM2912

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SILCHER

PD-90169

IMPORTED

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LORELEY (*Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten*). (Silcher) One side. Heinrich Schlusnus (Baritone) with Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Weigert.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

HANDEL

BEETHOVEN

PD-95421

IMPORTED

CANTATA CON STROMENTI: *Arioso (Dank sei Dir, Herr)*. (Handel) One side and
DIE HIMMEL RÜHMEN: *Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur*. (Beethoven) One side. Heinrich Schlusnus (Baritone) with Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Weigert.
One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

KREUTZER

ABT

PD-90168

IMPORTED

SCHÄFERS SONNTAGSLIED (*Das ist der Tag des Herrn*). (Kreutzer) One side and
WALDANDACHT (*Frühmorgens, wenn die Hähne kräh'n*), Op. 211, No. 3. (Abt) One side. Heinrich Schlusnus (Baritone) with Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Hermann Weigert. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

The Hahn songs make welcome additions to recorded vocal music. They are graceful and well-written, and Ninon Vallin sings them acceptably. The composer provides a good piano accompaniment for each song.

Dvorák recordings seem to be confined mainly to his *New World* Symphony, Slavonic Dances and *Humoresque*, so that the *Four Biblical Songs*, sung with skill and restraint by Egon Fuchs, have an engaging air of novelty. The simplicity and sincerity of feeling evident in these songs are immensely attractive. The singer is supported in each instance by a small orchestra, and the recording is excellent.

COLUMBIA MASTERWORKS*

—New Issues—



STRAVINSKY: SYMPHONIE DE PSAUMES. Columbia announces with peculiar satisfaction a recording of the most important work composed in many years and one of the most important of the century—Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, written in 1930, "to the glory of God," dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra for its fiftieth anniversary and first performed in America by that organization. The work exhibits deep religious feeling, is one of the sincerest expressions of Stravinsky's notable genius and one of his most inspired utterances to the present time. The music is primitive and austere with

all the severe beauties which these conditions render possible in the hands of a musician of Stravinsky's great gifts. It is a matter of gratification that this new work appears first in America and under Columbia label, with the authentic reading of the composer.

Columbia Masterworks Set No. 162

Stravinsky: Symphonie de Psalms, for Orchestra and Chorus, in 6 Parts. By Igor Stravinsky, conducting Orchestre des Concerts Stiam and Alexis Vlassoff Chorus. Three twelve-inch Records, \$6.00 with Album.

CHOPIN: ÉTUDES FOR PIANOFORTE. This new set of the beautiful Etudes of Chopin is notable for its completeness, including as it does the three Posthumous Etudes, seldom heard. Far from fulfilling the dry dictionary definition of a "study" they are inescapably and universally tuneful. Chopin himself is said to have declared that the third Etude contained the best melody he had ever written—an opinion shared by many who have come after him. This complete collection of the Etudes is recorded by the admired French pianist, Robert Lortat.



Columbia Masterworks Set No. 163

Chopin: Études for Pianoforte. Set of 8 Records. By Robert Lortat. \$12.00 with Album.

IL TROVATORE (VERDI): COLUMBIA OPERATIC SERIES—No. 9. The most popular opera of Verdi and possibly the most popular of all ever written, now appears in complete form on the Columbia list.

What memories of imperishable melodies the name of *Il Trovatore* brings to mind!—The Miserere, the Anvil Chorus, Di Quella Pira, Tacea la Notte, Stride la Vampa, Ai Nostri Monti, Il Balen, Deserto sulla Terra—the tale is almost endless. They are all here, sung by some of Italy's best singers, supported by the great orchestra and chorus of La Scala Theatre. In the chronology of Verdi's works *Il Trovatore* followed *Rigoletto* after an interval of two years. The brilliant success of its first performance heralded a popularity that is practically as great today after three quarters of a century.

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"Magic Notes"

Friedrich Silcher (1789-1860), composer of *Lieder*, was born near Schorndorf, Württemberg. His songs are immensely popular in Germany, and some of them, in fact, have almost been accepted as folk-songs. The song rendered here, a melancholy piece, is movingly sung by Heinrich Schlusnus. The Peters song (is the composer Guido Peters? the label is silent on that score) is more martial in character, stirringly sung by Schlusnus, who is effectively accompanied by the Berlin State Opera Orchestra.



The Beethoven and Handel numbers, neither of which is new to records, are well-sung, and the Berlin State Opera Orchestra provides good accompaniments . . . Franz Abt, song-writer and conductor, was born at Eilenburg in 1819 and died at Wiesbaden in 1885. The label translates the piece here as *Quiet Forest Devotion (When God Our Lord Moves Through the Wood)*. The Kreutzer number is pleasing, and Schlusnus gives his customary gratifying performance. All the Schlusnus discs are recorded too powerfully, so that owners of electrical machines will find it necessary to do some experimenting with needles and the volume control. With the proper adjustments of these matters, however, the distortion due to the over-amplification can be corrected.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SCHUBERT
B-85004 | { | AM MEER. One side and
AN DIE MUSIK. One side. Heinrich Schlusnus (Baritone)
with piano accompaniment by Franz Rupp.
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| TOSELLI
LEON-
CAVALLO
C-G4052M | { | SERENADE. (Toselli) One side and
MATTINATA. (Leoncavallo) One side. Richard Tauber
(Tenor) with Dajos Bela Concert Orchestra.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.25. |
| BENELLI
LONGAS
V-1532 | { | NINNA-NANNA (<i>Berceuse Veneciana</i>). (Benelli) One side
and
GITANA. (Longas) One side. Tito Schipa (Tenor) with or-
chestra. One 10-inch disc. \$1.50. |

All three domestic companies this month issue discs by their leading vocalists. The Schlusnus disc, containing two Schubert songs, offers much the finest music. The singing, too, is excellent, and there is a good accompaniment for each number by Franz Rupp . . . Tauber's disc is of special interest in view of his forthcoming American tour this season. In order to celebrate the event, Columbia is issuing several of his records. This one is beautifully sung and recorded, and the Dajos Bela Orchestra supplies the sort of accompaniment admirers of the organization would expect from it . . . The Schipa disc is likewise well sung, though there is nothing of much consequence in the music. Both the accompaniments and the recording are very good.

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CHORAL



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to

V-C2213

IMPORTED

HIAWATHA: *The Death of Minnehaha*. Eight sides. Royal Choral Society conducted by Malcolm Sargent, with orchestra. Four 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.

The first section of Coleridge-Taylor's Hiawatha trilogy, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, was issued last Fall on four 12-inch H. M. V. discs (V-C1931 to V-C1934), and the set was reviewed on page 427 of the December, 1930, issue of *Disques*. Notes on the pleasant, if not very profound, music were included in the review and so need not be repeated here. The second section, *The Death of Minnehaha*, now follows, and it is sung with great enthusiasm by the Royal Choral Society. A large orchestra, well-balanced with the chorus, is on hand, and the recording is extraordinarily good. Those who liked the previous records need have no hesitation about obtaining these discs.

**PUJOL
MOYA**

V-AB658

IMPORTED

SANT JORDI TRIOMFANT. (Pujol) One side and **MARINADA.** (Moya) One side. Orfeo Catalá conducted by Lluís Millet, and Cobla Barcelona. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Those who enjoyed the zarzuelas recently reviewed in *Disques* will like this record. *Marinada* is a *Sardana*, the national dance of Catalonia, which is danced in a large ring to the accompaniment of a small flute played with one hand, while the other beats a drum. The piece is stirringly sung by the Orfeo Catalá, while the Cobla Barcelona, whatever it may be, provides an exciting accompaniment, in which the small flute, or *flaviol*, figures prominently. Francesch Pujol, a modern Spanish composer and musicologist of the Catalan group, is a pupil of Lluís Millet and an advocate of nationalism in music. His *Sant Jordi Triumphant*, given here, is colorful music, and the vigorous rendition by the Orfeo Catalá and the Cobla Barcelona is admirable. The recording is as fine a piece of choral reproduction as we have heard in months. An exceptionally interesting disc, full of likeable tunes and rhythms.

DOBROWEN

C-50305D

(a) **AN OLD POLKA.** (Dobrowen). (b) **TWO COSSACK SONGS.** (arr. Jaroff). (c) **PANIHIDA** (*Funeral Dirge*). (arr. Tschesnokoff) Two sides. Don Cossacks Choir conducted by Serge Jaroff. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

The recording is excellent, and all the tricks for which this choir is famous are exhibited with its usual skill. The *Funeral Dirge* is impressively solemn and moving, forming a striking contrast to the hilarity of the other two numbers.

New RCA Victor Long-Playing Records

Following is a list of the new RCA Victor Company program transcriptions. The long-playing process is described elsewhere in this issue. With the exception of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven, which is reviewed under Orchestra this month, none of these discs reached us in time to be reviewed in this issue. They will be noticed next month.

ORCHESTRA

SYMPHONY No. 5 in *C Minor*. (Beethoven) Two sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. One 12-inch disc (V-L7001). \$4.50.

LA GRAND PAQUE RUSSE *Overture*. (Rimsky-Korsakov) One side and CAPRICCIO ITALIEN. (Tchaikowsky) One side. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. One 12-inch disc (V-L7002). \$4.50.

SYMPHONY No. 4 in *D Major*. (Haydn) Two sides. New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini. One 12-inch disc (V-L7003). \$4.50.

NUTCRACKER *Suite*. (Tchaikowsky) Two sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. One 12-inch disc (V-L7004). \$4.50.

CARMEN *Suite*. (Bizet) Two sides. Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. One 10-inch disc (V-L1000). \$3.

PETROUCHKA *Suite*. (Strawinsky) Two sides. Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. One 10-inch disc (V-L1001). \$3.

CARNEVAL *Overture*. (Dvorák) One side and (a) FAIRY TALES. (Suk) (b) SLAVONIC DANCE No. 1 in *G Minor*. (Dvorák) One side. Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock. One 10-inch disc (V-L1004). \$3.

SYMPHONY No. 4 in *B Flat Major*. (Beethoven) Two sides. Pablo Casals Orchestra of Barcelona conducted by Pablo Casals. One 12-inch disc (V-L11600). \$3.

PEER GYNT SUITES NOS. 1 and 2. (Grieg) Two sides. Victor Symphony Orchestra and Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eugène Goossens. One 12-inch disc (V-L11604). \$3.

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: (a) *Siegfried's Journey to the Rhine*. (b) *Funeral Music*. (Wagner) Two sides. One 10-inch disc (V-L4508). \$1.75.

SALON SUITE No. 1. Two sides. Victor Salon Orchestra. One 10-inch disc (V-L24000). \$1.50.

RHAPSODY IN BLUE. (Gershwin) Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. One side and (a) LIGHTS AND SHADOWS. (b) SONG OF BAYOU. One side. Victor Salon Group. One 10-inch disc (V-L24001). \$1.50.

ORCHESTRAL SUITE: *Kamenoi Ostrow; Liebestraum; In a Persian Garden; In a Chinese Garden*. Two sides. Victor Symphony Orchestra and International Concert Orchestra. One 10-inch disc (V-L24002). \$1.50.

SCHUBERT MELODIES. Two sides. Victor Salon Orchestra. One 10-inch disc (V-L4510). \$1.75.

PIANO

SONATA in *B Flat Minor*. (Chopin) Two sides. Serge Rachmaninoff (Piano). One 12-inch disc (V-L7000). \$4.50.

HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY No. 2. (Liszt) One side and INVITATION TO THE WALTZ. (Weber) One side. Alfred Cortot (Piano). One 10-inch disc (V-L1003). \$3.

OPERA

AÏDA: *La fatal pietra—Morir! si pura e bella.* (Verdi) Giovanni Martinelli (Tenor) and Rosa Ponselle (Soprano). One side and LA BOHÈME: *Death Scene.* (Puccini) One side. Tito Schipa (Tenor) and Lucrezia Bori (Soprano). One 12-inch disc (V-L7005). \$4.50.

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA. (Mascagni) Six sides. Italian Operatic Artists, La Scala Chorus and Orchestra conducted by Carlo Sabajno. Three 12-inch discs (V-L11601 to V-L11603). \$3 each.

H. M. S. PINAFORE. (Gilbert-Sullivan) Six sides. D'Oyly Carte Operatic Company. Three 12-inch discs (V-L11605 to V-L11607). \$3 each.

BORIS GOUDOUNOW: (a) *Farewell of Boris.* (b) *Death of Boris.* (Moussorgsky) One side and DON QUICHOTTE: *Finale.* (Massenet) One side. Feodor Chaliapin (Bass). One 10-inch disc (V-L1005). \$3.

VICTOR HERBERT MELODIES No. 1. Four sides. Victor Salon Group. Two 10-inch discs (V-L4500 and V-L4501). \$1.75 each.

VICTOR HERBERT MELODIES No. 2. Four sides. Victor Salon Group. Two 10-inch discs (V-L4506 and V-L4507). \$1.75 each.

FRIML MELODIES No. 1. Four sides. Victor Salon Group. Two 10-inch discs (V-L4502 and V-L4503). \$1.75 each.

VOCAL

SCHUBERT MELODIES. Two sides. John McCormack (Tenor) and Victor Salon Orchestra. One 10-inch disc (V-L4509). \$1.75.

FOSTER MELODIES. Four sides. Nathaniel Shilkret and Victor Salon Group and Orchestra. Two 10-inch discs (V-L4504 and V-L4505). \$1.75 each.



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LONDON, W1



CORRESPONDENCE



Misplaced Praise, He Thinks

Editor, *Disques*:

Until recently I have greatly admired the policy of *Disques* in giving all records an equal chance. Praise was given where due, and withheld even when it might have tended to reduce sales of the particular record. It is with considerable regret that I have lately become increasingly aware of indications that this Utopian state of reviewing is on its way to disappear from your pages. The policy which is apparently gaining in favor is the reprehensible one . . . of acclaiming the latest recording of a selection as being far superior to all previous versions of the same piece, whether it really is or not. Perhaps this is one way to counteract the effects of "depression": try to make the bewildered record-buyer dissatisfied with the one he has, so that he will rush to acquire the "latest and best" version.

The August issue of *Disques* contains several illustrations of my point. Your reviewer rhapsodizes eloquently over Furtwängler's *Tristan* Prelude, and rightly; but he also characterizes previous versions as merely "adequate," saying that this new version "fills a glaring gap in the catalogues." But can you in all fairness claim that Richard Strauss has not done as good a job? I played both recordings twice over tonight to try to establish the superiority of Furtwängler, but, in this at least, I think Strauss is his equal. Furthermore, this affords an enlightening comparison between the two conductors, since both recordings are played by the same orchestra ("wonderfully responsive and capable"), and both are recorded by the same company in apparently the same hall. Your reviewer's words apply equally well to Strauss's version, I think. The only difference is that Strauss takes the music at a slightly quicker pace, so as to get it all on two sides, and that he uses the concert ending.

The review of Ravel's *La Valse* is another case in point: "This is a brilliant and sympathetic interpretation." To this all I can say is: play Coates's recording before or after Wolff's, and see which one you get the bigger kick out of. In spite of superior recording, the new one is inexpressibly dull

and unexciting compared with the old version. Furthermore, its effectiveness is hampered by its being on four incompletely-filled sides, as compared with the three full sides of the other.

You may object to this as being merely a personal opinion as to the respective merits of these recordings: and yet I think that in the case of the *Tristan* Prelude, an unprejudiced listener, hearing both recordings without knowing which was which, would be unable to detect any such vast superiority as is imputed to the Furtwängler version; and that most people would agree that Coates's *La Valse* is the more brilliant of the two. It is true you do not mention any previous version of *La Valse*, and perhaps I am unfair to your reviewer when I find this implied comparison in his review.

On the other hand, it is gratifying to see that my objection does not hold true in all the reviews in the present issue. You are quite candid in saying that Stock's performance of the Mozart symphony, in spite of being the latest, is not the ideal version.

I can not agree with Charles H. Mitchell that untrue pitch is "the most annoying and least advertised defect of the modern phonograph." A good machine and motor do away with variations in pitch, except those few (and they are very few indeed) which are the fault of the recording turntable. The most insistent and annoying defect is, I think, the poor surfaces of the records. Only one company makes records which have a good surface: the English branch of the Gramophone Co. (H. M. V.). In a collection which includes about three hundred English H. M. V. records (most of them bought by mail, sight unseen), only one—just *one*—has a rough surface. Furthermore, they do not get rough with age, as other records do. . . . Most of my domestic album sets are the result of picking one record here, another there, etc., till I found a set in which most of the surfaces were passable. It seems to me that before the long-playing records can possibly be a success, the surface will have to be improved.

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Correspondence

From Composer to Listener

Editor, *Disques*:

"I have proceeded from the axiomatic truth that composition is the most important thing in music and that the composer is the hub of the musical wheel."

So wrote Dr. Howard Hanson, director of the Eastman School of Music at Rochester, New York, in a long letter to Mr. Olin Downes, music critic of the *New York Times*, which the latter published May 31, 1931. Dr. Hanson was explaining the efforts of the school he directs to give encouragement and a hearing to American composers.

This moves me to call attention to a complementary axiomatic truth, also not fully realized—the importance of the listener to the welfare of music. Between the potential composers with something to say, if they could only get a hearing, and the potential music lovers willing to listen if the opportunity were given them, stand the middlemen of music—the performers or interpreters, often strangely scornful both of the creators of music and of those who find interest, joy, consolation or whatever other things there are in music that give it human value.

Breaking down the barriers between those who are capable of speaking through music and those willing and eager to listen are inventors who are making possible the almost perfect reproduction of musical sounds from permanent records. Oddly enough, some who think they have the best interests of music at heart have greeted this new development as if it meant the death of music. Rather it means only the death of excessive arrogance and undue pretensions by some interpreters or performers of music. It dissolves the performer's personality into its proper relationship to the whole cause of music and makes the performer as invisible and as unobtrusive as the composer. It creates for the composer new possibilities of finding his audience anywhere, in the smallest village or the isolated home as well as in great centers of population. For, if the composer or his friends can once bring together a body of intelligent and sympathetic interpreters able to give adequate expression to what he has in mind, then his work can live on without the necessity of innumerable repetitions of this often difficult undertaking. Such repetitions of actual performance have little or nothing to do with the creation of music and therefore the neces-

sity for them has tended to stifle music's development. Relief from this old necessity should not only remove an immense obstacle to the composer in finding listeners but should serve to free competent interpreters from the drudgery of repetitions beyond the need of mastery of any one work and leave them time for fresh endeavors. It may serve as prevention of figurative cruelty to animals by taking overworked "war horses" from concert programs.

A wise fostering of the interest of composers would, it seems to me, include effort toward having the works of any of them showing promise properly recorded and disseminated among the growing body of intelligent listeners to records. Special endowments might well be devoted to the non-commercial production of records with this end in view. Surely there would be no more misdirected effort or waste in this than is now risked in endowing schools to foster talents in the performance of music.

ADOLPH SCHMUCK

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Juan Manén

Editor, *Disques*:

Among the numerous throng of composers scarcely noticed by the recording companies is Juan (or Joan) Manén, admittedly the leader of the Catalan moderns. His first operas were well received in Germany, although labelled *futuristic*: his latest work, *Nerone*, given last winter at the Liceo in Barcelona, abounds in pleasant melodies (à la Richard Strauss), which became instantly popular, but so far as I know are still unrecorded. The finest of his songs, *Lo divi Estel*, has been recorded by Conchita Supervia (O-188.700): two of his best *Sardanas* have also been done. However, Manén is by training and instinct a violinist; he has composed at least three concertos, four caprices, variations, suites, and a Scherzo fantastique, for violin and orchestra. I think that any of these delightful compositions given so often by the *Orfeó Catalá* of Barcelona would make unusually magnificent recording material. Several gramophiles have already communicated this matter to La Voz de su Amo Co. in Spain, and to M. Manén himself.

SCHUYLER LAURENCE

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BOOKS

GREAT WOMEN - SINGERS OF MY TIME. By Herman Klein. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. \$3.50.

It is good news that this book, first published in England several months ago, is now available to American readers. The author of these absorbing reminiscences of the great women-singers of the latter part of the past and the early part of the present centuries is well known to record collectors, or at least to that considerable number who read the *Gramophone*. Mr. Klein contributes each month a column called "The Gramophone and the Singer," and the very able and illuminating reviews of the new operatic and vocal discs that are a monthly feature are also from his hand. No more interesting material than his appears in the *Gramophone*, and this in spite of the fact that, to the ordinary reader, his subject is by no means the most interesting of all those with which the *Gramophone* deals.

What lends special interest and authenticity to this volume is that the author not only heard but also personally knew most of the singers he writes about in his book. His astonishingly accurate and abundant memory goes back some sixty years, and he can actually recall hearing Tietjens in 1866. Though one of the oldest critics now practicing—"the doyen of English musical critics," he calls himself,—he is also one of the liveliest; the dullness, windiness, garrulity, and tendency toward cock-sureness and resounding platitude that are so often all too common indications of age—and extreme youth—are not visible in his writings.

Mr. Klein believes that there has been a marked decline in the art of the singer. Taken by and large, he hints, the singers of today are not the equals of those of yesterday. "The cycle I am dealing with marked the close of the Golden Age of the lyric art. I watched its slow *Dämmerung* and observed with sorrow the final procession of the goddesses into Valhalla." Those who feel inclined to dispute this are referred to Ernest Newman's lively preface to the volume. Speaking of Mr. Klein's belief that the greatest singers are now dead, Mr. Newman says: "It is easy to turn that off with a smile and a quotation of *laudator temporis acti*; but we

would do well to reflect that Mr. Klein has more right to his opinion than we have to the contrary one, for while he has heard all our crack singers, the majority of us have heard very few of his." And a paragraph or so later: "As Mr. Klein says, it is a pity the gramophone was not invented a few generations earlier than it was. We might then have been able to hear the great singers of the past for ourselves, and to get some faint idea of what the Fidelio of Schroeder-Devrient was like, or Nilsson's Donna Elvira, or Tietjens' Donna Anna, or Materna's Brynhilde, or Ilma di Murska's Queen of Night, or Malten's Kundry, or to know what Patti sounded like in her best days. It stands to reason that our fathers and grandfathers would not have raved as they did over these and other singers unless they were something quite out of the common; and to be out of the common, one suspects, meant more in the singing world of that time than it does in ours, for the standard was higher."

One of the chief reasons for the decline of the singer, at least so far as the musical public is concerned, Mr. Klein indicates, is that the public now tends to give more attention to the composer and his work. Confronted only with a *Lucia di Lammermoor*, a *Robert the Devil*, or a *Norma*, the critics of yesterday had of necessity to devote most of their space to the artists who appeared in these operas. But when Wagner's works began to attract attention, the singer was relegated to the background, and the work itself was given first consideration.

Mr. Klein, despite his evident admiration for these singers, maintains his critical balance, and he has much that is interesting and revealing to say about the women he has selected to include in his volume. The pages of his book, he says, are not intended "to portray a race of superior beings." They deal, instead, "simply with a group of supreme artists; some of whom were very marvellous singers." Among the singers dealt with in his book are: Theresa Tietjens, Adeline Patti, Pauline Lucca, Christine Nilsson, Nellie Melba, Emma Calvé, Marietta Alboni, Janet Monach Patey, Sofia Scalchi, Giulia Ravogli, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, Thérèse Malten, Lilli Lehmann and many others. There are sixteen illustrations.

